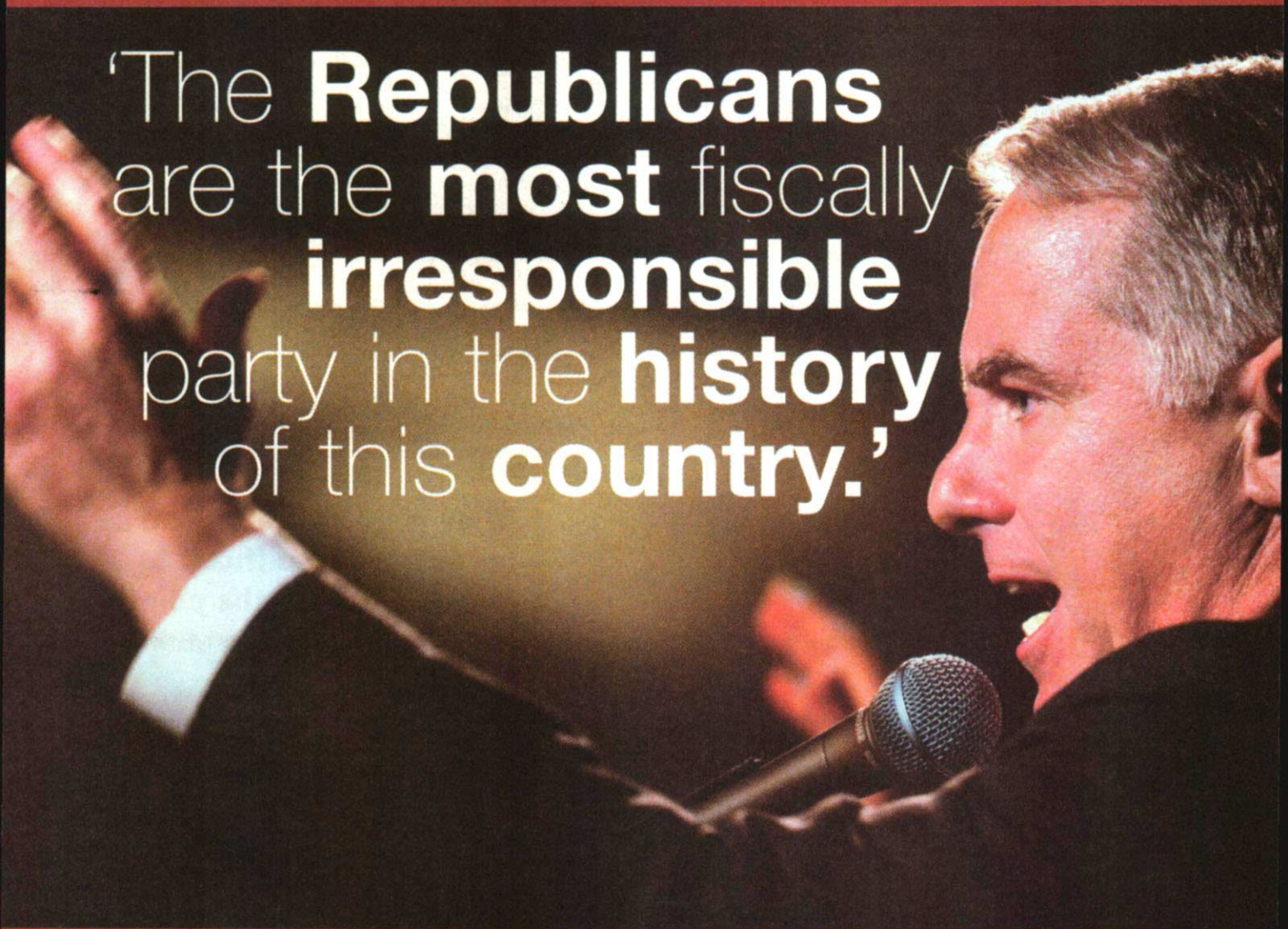


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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

June 23, 2003



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party in the **history**
of this **country.**'

Meet Howard Dean

David Moberg interviews the Democratic presidential hopeful.



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Editorial

Isn't That Special

France has charged that U.S. media are publishing misinformation received from anonymous Bush administration officials who are orchestrating a "disinformation campaign aimed at sullyng France's image and misleading the public."

If the charges are true—and, based on the documentation provided by the French government, they appear to be—the White House is engaged in a domestic covert operation to pervert American public opinion. Such campaigns are illegal under the laws governing U.S. intelligence agencies.

In a May 15 letter to members of Congress, the Bush administration and the U.S. media, French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte draws attention to eight reports that appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Times*, MSNBC and *Newsweek* (www.info-france-usa.org). The stories range from France's harboring secret supplies of smallpox, to France's providing false passports to help Iraqi leaders escape capture by U.S. forces, to France's selling Iraq switches that could be used to detonate a nuclear bomb.

As if to confirm such suspicions, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, when asked about the ambassador's letter, said ominously, "France has historically had a very close relationship with Iraq. My understanding is that it continued right up until the outbreak of the war. What took place thereafter, we'll find out." (Just like we'll find out about those weapons of mass destruction.)

An explanation of the thinking that led the administration to target France can be found in the May 5 *New Yorker*. Seymour Hersh writes that operating out of the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans is a group of eight or nine policy advisers and analysts who call themselves "the Cabal." (*Webster's* defines cabal as "a small group of secret plotters, as against a government or person in authority.") According to Hersh, the Office of Special Plans, an intelligence unit that was the post-9/11 brainchild of Paul Wolfowitz, has beaten out its rivals (the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency) and captured the president's ear.

In an interview with the *London Observer*, Vince Cannistraro, a former CIA chief of counter terrorism, was disdainful of the Cabal's tactics: "Their methods are vicious. The politicisation of intelligence is pandemic, and deliberate disinformation is being promoted." Lawrence Korb, an assistant secretary of

defense in the Reagan administration, was more diplomatic: "Rumsfeld set up his own intelligence agency because he didn't like the intelligence he was getting."

And Hersh reported that a former Bush administration intelligence official who resigned had this to say about the Cabal: "They didn't like the intelligence they were getting, so they brought in people to write the stuff. They were so crazed and so far out and so difficult to reason with—to the point of being bizarre. Dogmatic, as if they were on a mission from God."

Cabal members are bound together in their worship of Leo Strauss, a University of Chicago political science professor who served as the dissertation advisor of Paul Wolfowitz and Abram Shulsky, director of the Office of Special Plans. As Hersh puts it, Strauss believed "that the works of ancient philosophers contain deliberately concealed esoteric meanings whose truths can be comprehended only by a very few." Indeed, Shulsky once wrote that the Straussian idea of concealed meanings "alerts one to the possibility that political life may be closely linked to deception, and the hope, to say nothing of the expectation, of establishing a politics that can dispense with it is an exception."

'They were so crazed and so far out and so difficult to reason with—to the point of being bizarre.'

But in a constitutional democracy, where does government deception end and criminality begin? The Cabal has crossed that line. Administration officials knowingly circulated false information in pursuit of their hidden policy objectives. No democracy can function if citizens are lied to and denied basic information about the public issues that will affect their lives and those of their children.

The Cabal's campaign is reminiscent of Reagan administration efforts to manipulate the national media (with the help of psychological operations officers on loan from the Army) to garner public support for the wars in Central America. But this time, the gambit appears to have been successful, at least judging from the absurdly lopsided media coverage.

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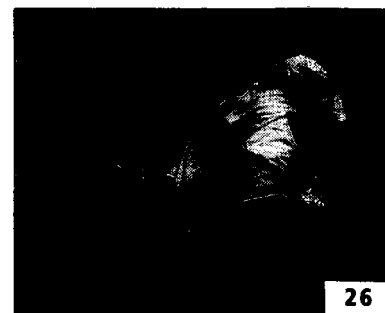
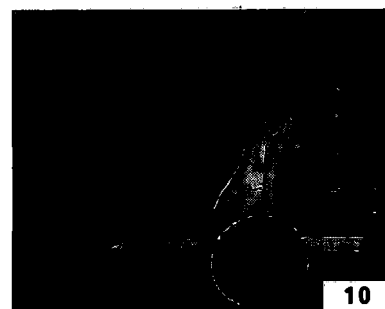
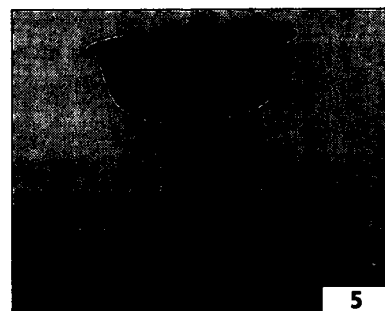
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The history and future of the American left.



Democratic Dissent

In response to G. William Domhoff ("Which Side Are We On?" April 14): It is one thing to argue that our progressive and revolutionary social movements should be willing to look favorably upon moderates and elites who support progressive social reforms. It would be a mistake, however, to argue that our social movements should frame their identity and discourse in such a way as to look more attractive to moderates and liberally disposed elites. Nothing can come of this except the building of a loose coalition of broad interests, which has so little collective vision that only the most tepid reforms can be proposed, and so little solidarity and collective power that we could not even fight for them.

Aaron Major
New York

In a very important article, Domhoff suggests that we define ourselves as an egalitarian coalition against corporate conservatives. I think we should, rather, speak of a democratic-egalitarian coalition. Equality and democracy are closely related, but they are different, in some ways, and they have different appeals to different groups.

We want free health care for all, for example, because it is vital for everyone, and no one should lack care for lack of money. But free health care means that it is given equally to rich and poor, so it increases the equality of income, as measured by actual goods and services. Similarly, free higher education would also increase income equality—in terms of real goods and services—because it would be equally available to rich and poor.

Democracy can help enforce greater equality, but it affects other issues as well. A truly effective democracy means that everyone should have equal power, regardless of their wealth. But the influence of wealth can be fully removed only when people have more equal incomes than today. More equality can be achieved by direct measures, such as free health care and education, and by moving toward economic democracy.

Economic democracy means taking control away from a small oligarchy and giving it to all of us. The city of Los Angeles, for example, has a very successful enterprise supplying water and power—so it was not hurt by the energy price manipulations that caused a crisis in the California private

energy system. Some corporations, such as Avis, are run by their own employees, rather than an exclusive oligarchy.

We need more political and economic democracy as well as equality, so both should be emphasized by the left. A coalition that emphasizes democracy and equality should be more popular than the right-wing coalition that emphasizes private decisions by a corporate oligarchy and inequality of income and wealth.

We must also fight for international democracy and equality. Democracy means a strengthened United Nations, not military adventures by the United States acting alone in the interests of some corporate conservatives. Equality means finding ways to stop starvation and disease in all countries. The technology is now available to provide adequate food and health care to all countries, but is prevented by corporate conservative institutions.

Howard Sherman
Professor of Economics (Emeritus)
University of Riverside, California

Domhoff replies: I agree with everything in both letters, so I welcome this opportunity to make that point clear, as I hope I also do in the book, Changing the Powers that Be, from which my article was excerpted. Yes, with Aaron Major, we must never trim on our strong collective vision for the future, once it is agreed

upon, and it should be presented by egalitarian candidates in Democratic Party primaries, and through the activities of social movements that adhere strictly to strategic nonviolence. However, once the primaries and the social actions are over, it makes sense to support the larger coalition to unseat the corporate-conservative coalition now situated overwhelmingly in the Republican Party.

Yes, with Howard Sherman, it should be a democratic-egalitarian coalition, and I echo his points about economic democracy and a truly progressive internationalist foreign policy in specific chapters in my book. We need to: transform the Democratic Party through involvement in its primaries as Green, Egalitarian and Wellstone Democrats; develop ways to create economic democracy by using the market to implement government plans; practice strategic nonviolence through social movements that are linked to the electoral arena from time to time in nonpartisan elections and through Democratic primaries. If the left did just those three things, it would start to have a serious impact.

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Terry LaBan



Privatizing Iraq

The Bush administration's neoliberal blueprint for the post-Saddam state

By Eric Laursen

By now, it's no secret that the Bush administration's plans for its new satrapy in

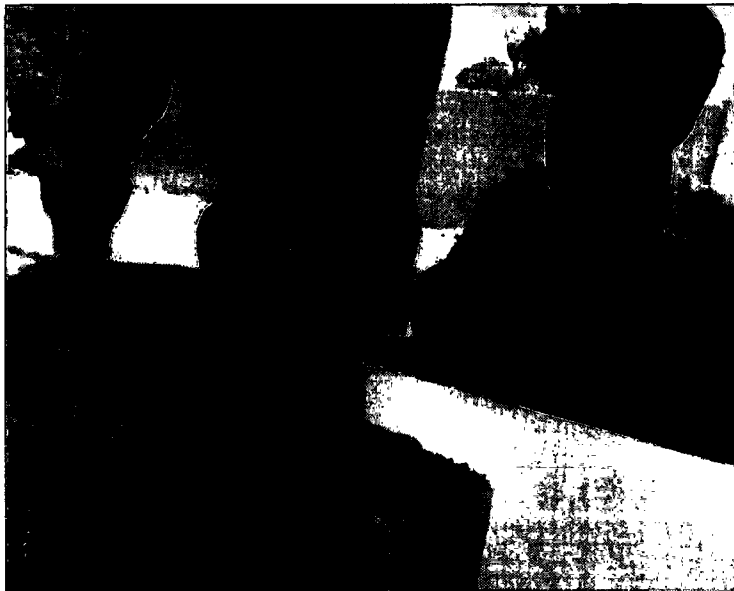
Iraq are as much economic as military. The most visible signs of the future it has mapped out for the Middle East's second biggest oil storehouse are the huge contracts the White House has awarded its corporate cronies. Halliburton's Kellogg Brown & Root subsidiary received a contract worth up to \$7 billion over two years. Bechtel has a contract worth \$680 million the first 18 months and perhaps as much as \$100 billion overall.

But the bigger picture of Washington's Iraqi dreams is forming more gradually. The most important element to date is a document titled "Moving the Iraqi Economy from Recovery to Sustainable Growth," revealed by the *Wall Street Journal* in early May. Created by the Treasury Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) as a blueprint for prospective contractors, it lays out a series of steps the administration wants to achieve over the next year in Iraq, steps that will launch the country as a test case for exporting the neoliberal economic model to the Middle East. Key goals include privatizing state-owned assets, including oil, creating a "world-class [stock] exchange," and instituting a consumption tax and a new Iraqi currency.

A USAID spokesperson says the document is not a definitive statement of Washington's intentions, and that not everything it describes will actually take place. But the scenario it lays out, added to other moves the Bush administration is known to be making, indicate that the path ahead for Iraq will probably look much like the force-fed economic trans-

formations that devastated many ex-Communist states in the '90s.

Overseeing the reconstruction of Iraq's financial system is Peter McPherson, head of USAID under Ronald Reagan. USAID has enthusiastically pushed privatization and marketization in countries as disparate as Kazakhstan, Hungary, Poland and Macedonia, often collaborating with the World Bank, which the White House is now also prodding to play a big role in Iraq. The Bank, in turn, has been the



The price of liberation.

driving force behind structural adjustment programs, which are comprised of selling off state-owned enterprises and turning public services into for-profit businesses, often owned by foreign contractors, in scores of countries around the globe. The blueprint is remarkably similar in almost every case.

Here's how it's supposed to work. State-owned enterprises, especially those controlling demonstrably valuable natural resources, are sold off, or their shares distributed to the public. This is supposed to provide capital to be sold on local stock and bond markets. To kick-start the markets, state-sponsored retirement systems are converted into individual accounts, in a way similar to U.S. citizens' 401(k) plans, to which workers contribute to fund their retirements. A consumption-based rather than income-based tax system is supposed to encourage workers to spend less and save more, further fueling capital markets.

And a stable currency—or, better yet, a "dollarized" system in which U.S. currency becomes the coin of the realm—serves to reassure foreign investors that they can play, too, without significant risk to the value of their holdings.

Unfortunately, this idealized "virtuous cycle" has seldom come to pass. In Chile, longtime poster child for pension privatization, financial vendors' marketing costs, passed on to workers in the form of ballooning management fees, have drastically shrunk pension returns.

In 1999, working off a plan that USAID, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank funded and helped draft, Kazakhstan required all workers to put 10 percent of their salaries into one of 13 privately managed investment funds. Privatization of the biggest publicly owned companies jump-started the market, and the project received a great deal of laudatory press.

But it didn't last. Both the privatizations and the pension conversion were rushed into place before the country had the infrastructure or investor sophistication to support them. Net result: Salaried Kazakh workers'

retirement savings have shrunk severely. The dream of a funded pension system that nurtures the local economy and grows alongside it has turned out to be just that.

Indications are that Iraq will follow much the same path. The World Bank has a close relationship with the Adam Smith Institute, a London-based, free-market think tank that recently published a paper advocating the privatization of Iraqi industry and the replacement of Iraq's state-guaranteed retirement system with private pension funds.

The Heritage Foundation, an influential American neoconservative think tank, is calling for Washington to administer a "comprehensive economic reform" of Iraq that includes preparing "state assets, including industries, utilities, transportation, ports and airports, pipelines, and the energy sector, for privatization." That recommendation is closely echoed in

the Treasury-USAID blueprint document, which schedules the next year for a propaganda offensive to persuade the Iraqi people that privatization is in their best interest, then the following three years for shifting the assets. The blueprint calls for all this to begin by July.

The short timetable has some longtime observers worrying that Iraq will suffer from another problem that has plagued privatization projects in developing countries: a headlong rush to get it all done fast. "There's a political imperative to dismantle the centrally planned state, and they're more concerned with that than with setting up proper regulatory structures," says Bea Edwards of Public Services International, the international trade union federation. "Regulation takes a long time. You have to make sure the people you put in charge are credible and ethical. But there just isn't time to vet them, and it's not the priority."

With tensions rising in the Middle East and the Bush administration eager to furnish Iraq as a shining new example of the "Washington consensus," the race is on. ■

Reason for Hope

India and Pakistan reach tentative agreement

By Amitabh Pal

Indians and Pakistanis can finally breathe a bit easier.

The past four years have been nerve-racking for the more than 1 billion citizens of India and Pakistan. The two countries fought a "limited" conflict in the summer of 1999, and twice in the past two years they have been on the brink of full-scale war, perhaps involving nuclear weapons.

So it was quite welcome—and astonishing—when, on April 18, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee extended India's "hand of friendship" to Pakistan during a visit to the state of Jammu and Kashmir, a province that both India and Pakistan claim. Vajpayee followed up with a May 2 announcement

to India's Parliament that India would re-establish full diplomatic ties and transportation links with Pakistan as a precursor to a peace dialogue. "The talks this time will be decisive," he said. "At least in my life, this is the last time I will be making an attempt. I am confident I will succeed."

Pakistani Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali responded by calling Vajpayee and offering to meet with him "in the cause of peace." Shortly thereafter, Pakistan announced that it was reciprocating India's steps. "The entire international community is watching with hope and expectation," Jamali said.

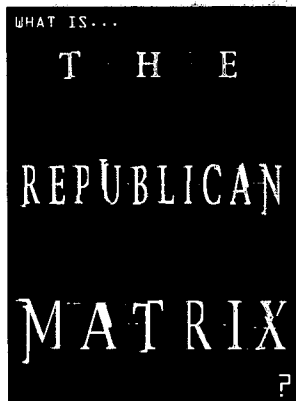
Vajpayee is an unusual peacemaker. He heads the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has its genesis in a Hindu-oriented nationalism hostile to Pakistan. So why did he make this move—and why now? "One possible reason lies in internal BJP politics, with Vajpayee reasserting his role as a moderate," says M.V. Ramana, co-editor of *Prisoners of the Nuclear Dream*, an analysis of the nuclear situation in South Asia. "Second, conditions in Kashmir are different after the election of a new state government there." (In state elections last fall, a Kashmir-based party was elected that is more sympathetic to demands for greater Kashmiri autonomy.)

Another motive is Vajpayee's desire to leave a lasting legacy in the region. "Vajpayee, 79, is unlikely to run for re-election in next year's national vote and longs to establish peace on the subcontinent before he ends his 50-year political career," Manjeet Kripalani writes in *BusinessWeek*.

To his credit, Vajpayee has twice made similar efforts in the past. In 1999, he undertook a journey to Pakistan. And in 2001, he invited Gen. Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's president, to India. His attempts were undone by recalcitrance on the part of Pakistan and dissent from hard-liners in his own party.

In any upcoming talks, Vajpayee will again have to contend with uncompromising elements in the Pakistani army—elements that have financed and trained the Kashmiri militancy, much to India's anger. He'll also have to stave off pressure from within his own party and from allied organizations that make up the Hindu right. "I am surprised that despite such

THIS MODERN WORLD



WHAT IS THE **REPUBLICAN MATRIX**? IT IS AN ILLUSION WHICH ENGULFS US ALL...A STEADY BARRAGE OF IMAGES WHICH OBSCURE REALITY...
BOY, DIDJA SEE THOSE PICTURES OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF IN A **FLIGHT SUIT**?

YOU BET I DID! I THINK FROM NOW ON WE SHOULD CALL HIM THE **HERO-IN-CHIEF**!



by TOM TOMORROW

IT IS A WORLD BORN ANEW EACH DAY...IN WHICH THERE IS NOTHING TO BE LEARNED FROM THE LESSONS OF THE PAST...

A TAX CUT FOR THE RICH WILL CREATE **MILLIONS OF NEW JOBS!**

IS THAT HOW IT WORKED OUT TWO YEARS AGO?

I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT YOU MIGHT BE TALKING ABOUT.



A WORLD WHERE LOGIC HOLDS NO SWAY...WHERE UP IS DOWN AND BLACK IS WHITE...

PRESIDENT BUSH IS WORKING TO **STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**--

--BY **REPEALING ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS!**

MAKES PERFECT SENSE TO ME!



WHERE REALITY ITSELF IS A MALLEABLE THING...SUBJECT TO CONSTANT REVISION...

IT DOESN'T MATTER IF WE FIND W.M.D.'S, BECAUSE WE **REALLY** WENT TO WAR TO FREE THE IRAQI PEOPLE!

EXCEPT, UM, IF WE DO FIND THEM. THEN THAT'S THE REASON AGAIN.



IN SHORT, IT'S **THEIR** WORLD--
WHAT SHOULD WE DO **TODAY, FELLAS?**

ANY DAMN THING WE WANT, GEORGE.

IS THIS A GREAT REALITY OR WHAT?



--WE'RE JUST TRAPPED IN IT.

bitter experiences in the past, the government is repeatedly talking peace with Pakistan," says Giriraj Kishore, senior vice president of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council). "Those who do not learn from past experiences bring harm to themselves, and if such a person happens to be a leader, he suffers, and so does the country."

The process will be more cautiously planned than in the past, with both sides indicating that a lot of work needs to be done before a summit meeting occurs. Given the mutual distrust, a considerable amount of care needs to be taken to ensure the negotiations do not again reach a dead end. "I am pessimistic," says Ramana. "I fear that the issues of Kashmir and cross-border terrorism are two subjects that may ... derail the talks."

For some time, the United States has been urging India and Pakistan to compromise. Its Iraq victory has provided additional heft with which to pressure the two countries. It has complicated its role, though, by attempting to balance an alliance with Pakistan, which it needs to hunt down al-Qaeda, with friendship with India, the world's second most populous nation. Vajpayee's peace overture came days before a visit to the region by Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage. Armitage called on Musharraf to completely halt infiltration of Kashmiri militants across the border—even though similar American pleas have gone unheeded before—and praised Vajpayee's move as "an act of statesmanship," while rejecting a high-profile American role in the negotiations.

What does the peace process mean for nuclear disarmament in the area? Disappointingly, probably not much. As a gambit, Pakistan offered to get rid of its weapons if India got rid of its arsenal, too, knowing that India would reject the offer. Predictably, Vajpayee dismissed the proposal, saying that India's nuclear program was not Pakistan-centered.

Still, any lessening of tensions lowers the chances of a nuclear apocalypse in South Asia. The region's people may not yet have cause to celebrate, but they do have less reason for worry. ■

Amitabh Pal is managing editor of *The Progressive*. He can be reached at amideepa@merr.com.

Tidal Wave

International movement takes on the water industry

By Erica Hartman

ACCRA, GHANA—In a new grassroots movement to combat the corporatization of water, organizers gathered here in mid-May for their first annual water forum. Titled "Securing the Right to Water in Africa," the event brought together various groups in Africa who oppose growing efforts by multinational corporations and lending institutions to privatize water.

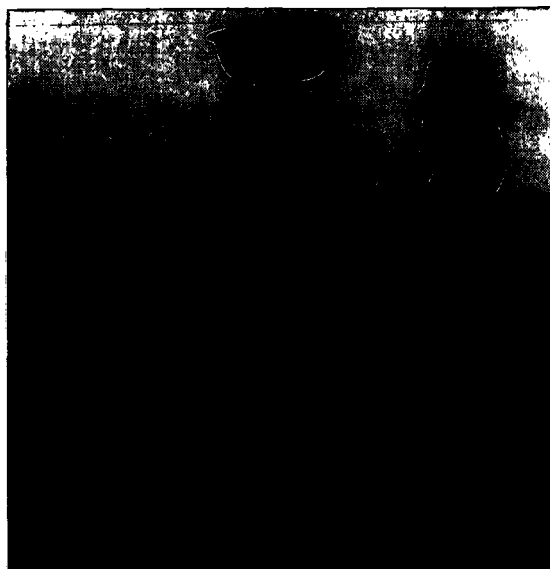
The World Bank has set its sights on Ghana as a poster child for water privatization in Africa. Under Bank loan requirements, monthly water rates have skyrocketed for the average Ghanaian. Now, the Bank is demanding the country privatize its system. A coalition of nonprofit groups and grassroots protesters have delayed the plan for two years.

Twenty-four other African countries have active World Bank loan conditions that include measures to privatize water systems. Many countries worldwide may face the same fate. As lawmakers pledge to reduce by half the amount of people who are deprived of clean and affordable drinking water by the year 2015, privatization is being promoted by the World Bank and by multinational corporations as the "solution" to global water scarcity. They argue the water scarcity problems will be solved by turning water into an economic good—a commodity to be controlled by global corporations and sold to the highest bidder in international markets.

But in places such as Accra and Nicaragua, citizens groups are fighting the commodification of water at the local level. "Water belongs to the earth and all species for all time," says a statement drafted by groups earlier this year in Kyoto, Japan, site of the Third World Water forum. "It is an inalienable human right and a public trust to be protected and nurtured by all peoples, communities

and nations, and the bodies that represent them at the local, state, and international level." To date, nearly 300 groups have signed on to the statement.

An estimated 8,000 people gathered in Kyoto for the forum, sponsored by the World Water Council. The Council is a heavily business-influenced think tank that focuses on water policy. This year, representatives from public interest, human rights, and consumer advocacy organizations attended the week-long meeting to protest the forum's corporate focus.



NATALIE BEHRING-CHISHOLM / GETTY

Water is under increasing threat in developing countries.

Activists passed out a vision statement about the global right to water to conference attendees and displayed blue headbands, printed in five languages, bearing the text "Water Is Life." On the final day of the conference, as former IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus presented a report in favor of water privatization, civil society groups staged a walk-out. Some activists stormed the stage, parading huge banners that read "World Water Mafia" and "Water Is a Human Right."

Citizens' groups in Florence, Italy, New Delhi, India, and Sao Paulo, Brazil, are already planning their second annual water forums. "The amazing work of the civil society coalition that came together to attend the forum will reverberate for years to come," water activist Maude Barlow said after the Kyoto meeting. ■

For more information, go to www.citizen.org/cnep/water.

Right To Know

With no help from U.S.,
the world takes steps to
find the "disappeared"

By Neve Gordon

Magdalena Emperatriz was kidnapped on May 31, 1982, during a counter-insurgency campaign carried out by the Salvadoran army. She was 15 days old. The campaign resulted in the killing of hundreds of civilians and the destruction of dozens of towns and hamlets as well as the abduction and disappearance of 54 small children.

In 1995, when Magdalena was 13 years old, she was located in an orphanage in San Salvador. The late Dr. Robert

Kirschner, former director of the International Forensic Program of Physicians for Human Rights, identified the girl through an analysis of her and the presumed father's DNA. The two were finally reunited.

Most of the missing people around the globe are not as lucky. In Guatemala, Haiti and Colombia, thousands of families have no knowledge of the fate of their missing relatives. The same is true in Congo, Burundi and Uganda. Indeed, hundreds of thousands of families from more than 60 countries around the world—including the United States, Canada and Mexico—wait day after day for some news about their missing loved ones. The "unaccounted for" can be conceived as a global epidemic.

The term "missing" refers to a wide range of situations resulting from armed conflict and internal violence: people

missing in action or held in some form of incommunicado detention, internally displaced people, and the victims of enforced disappearances. Regardless of the specific circumstances, the victims' families share a sense of uncertainty that leads to immense suffering.

In an attempt to heighten awareness about the missing, the International Committee of the Red Cross convened an international conference in February 2003. For the first time in history, government representatives, family groups, NGOs, military officers, scientists, and others gathered together to create tools that would ensure the authorities responsible for resolving the problem of missing people would be held accountable.

Different aspects of the phenomenon were addressed during the conference, ranging from improving scientific mechanisms of identification to preventing

Big Is Beautiful 4.1

A Seattle-area couple were evicted from their house in May, according to the *Seattle Times*, because it wasn't big enough for their neighbors. Six years ago, Alan Hord bought the property—five acres with mountain views—and converted a barn on the property into a house. As nice as that may sound, it was not classy enough for the Mountain View Country Estates Homeowners Association, which requires its members to build manses no smaller than 3,000 square feet. Since Hord and wife Sharon Adams were slumming in a mere 2,000 square feet of home, they clearly had to go. Snohomish County sheriffs enforced the eviction, and the homeowners association changed the locks on the house. Hord and Adams will not be welcome back until they submit plans for a big new pile.

Big Is Masterful 5.2

Meanwhile, Montana's *Billings Gazette* reports on the velvety touch of the invisible hand in

nearby Billings, Montana. Apparently, ever since a Wal-Mart opened here three years ago, managers from the mega-retailer have made it a habit to creep around local grocery stores. Shortly after Smith's announced it was closing, taking with it 48 jobs, three Wal-Mart goons made a common in the store. As they left, they high-fived each other, and one announced loudly, "Two down, and one to go!" He was referring to the earlier demise of Country Market and the imminent closing of Smith's. Only an Albertson's store remains. A Wal-Mart spokesman confirmed the incident to the *Gazette*, adding that it is company policy for managers to lurk at the stores of its prey.

Red Granola 8.7

Are you now, or have you ever been, one of those suckers who gives money to greenie door canvassers? Well, that's what some folks wanna call aidin' and abettin' terrorism, and if those folks get their way in several states

where certain testators is pending your wee mugger ass might find itself in a little bit of hot water. According to TomPaine.com, a group of well-funded mouth-breathers called the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is pushing versions of the Animal and Ecological Terrorism Act in several state legislatures. The Texas bill gives a taste of what ALEC is after. It defines as a terrorist organization any group of "two or more persons organized for the purpose of supporting any politically motivated activity intended to obstruct or deter any person from participating in an activity involving animals or ... natural resources." Political motivation, to clarify, "means an intent to influence a government entity or

the public to take a specific political action."

America's Pastime 5.9

As Bush '04's version of the "Secker mom," we finally recommend Valerie A. Yianacopolus of Wakefield, Massachusetts. According to the *Boston Herald*, Yianacopolus commanded her son, a Little Leaguer, to beat up an 11-year-old kid who was rooting for the other team. As her son punched the victim, Yianacopolus screamed "Hurt him, kill him," before joining the affray and herself kicking the unfortunate youngster in the face.



disappearances by establishing new regulations for military personnel. In addition, guidelines were formulated on how to support the victims' families, emphasizing the important role states can play in providing families with financial, psychological and legal assistance. "The conference was an extraordinary milestone," Leonard Rubenstein, executive director of Physicians for Human Rights, claimed, "not only because it succeeded in putting the issue of missing people on the map, but also because it allowed experts from all over the world to begin developing international standards for confronting the phenomenon."

There was, however, one major drawback, which went unreported by media covering the conference. The conference's motto was "The Right to Know." This slogan was inscribed on small bags distributed to the participants and was used on the meeting's banner. The idea behind it is straightforward: The relatives of the missing people have a right to know whether the victims are dead or alive, and their whereabouts.

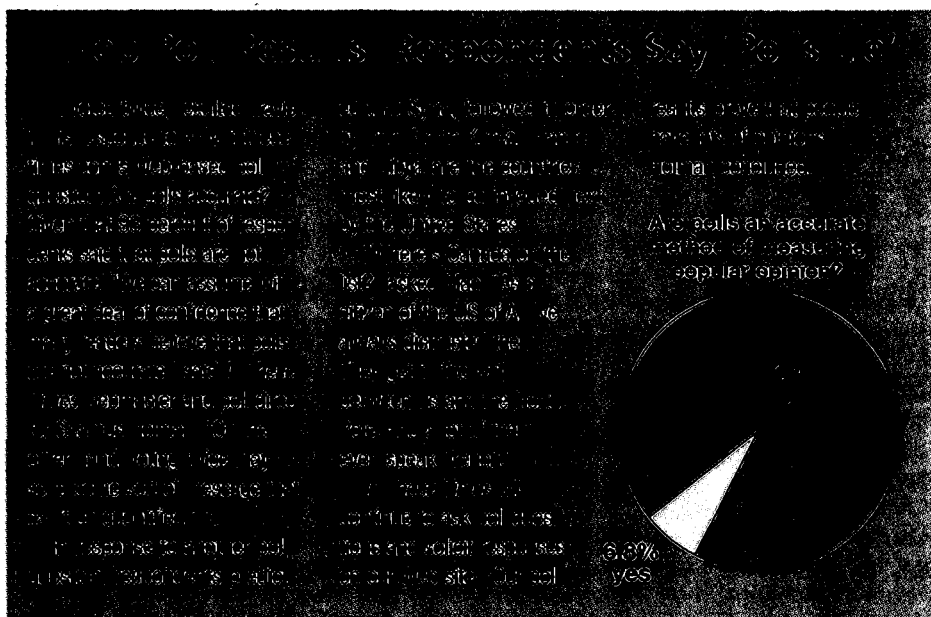
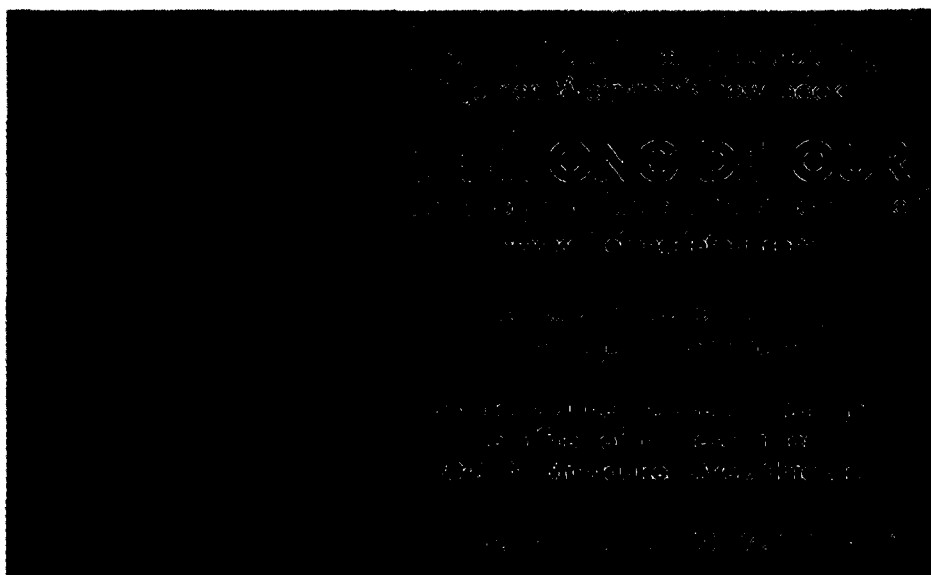
One would have thought, along with the conference organizers and most of the participants, that the right to know is a basic entitlement, and, as such, unanimously accepted. The U.S. government delegation viewed things differently, however, demanding that the "right to know" be erased from the final statement.

To know, they argued, is not a right; it is not established in international law, and although there is reference to such a right in Protocol I (an addition to the Fourth Geneva Convention, which makes reference to the right of families to know the fate of their relatives), the United States has not signed the Protocol.

That was more or less their line of argument. The subtext was that reference to a right to know would begin a movement toward further recognition of this right. Such recognition, the officials seem to believe, is inimical to U.S. interests—particularly at times of war.

The members of the U.S. delegation won the day, while the hundreds of thousands of people whose relatives are still missing lost. ■

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The war with Iraq isn't over until all our troops are out. Let's keep our peace movement strong and visible. Show where you stand with a peace flag from PEACEFLAGS.ORG. Activist-owned and run, no sweatshops. www.peaceflags.org

Biowar and the Apartheid Legacy

By Salim Muwakkil

Just as the threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction now seems a neocon-concocted mirage, word has begun leaking out about the spread of bioweapons far more threatening than anything in Saddam Hussein's purported arsenal.

A two-part story in the *Washington Post* on April 20 and 21 revealed that biological agents developed by the South African government during its apartheid days have fallen into private hands. Written by *Post* reporters Joby Warrick and John Mintz, the piece noted that unique, race-specific strains of biotoxins were available on the world market—for the right price or the right ideology.

Wouter Basson, the man who directed South Africa's clandestine bioweapons program, "spoke candidly [to federal officials] of global shopping sprees for pathogens and equipment, of plans for epidemics to be sown in black communities and of cigarettes and letters that were laced with anthrax." The *Post* said Basson "revealed the development of a novel anthrax strain unknown to the U.S. officials, a kind of 'stealth' anthrax that Basson claimed could fool tests used to detect the disease."

The top-secret program that Basson directed was called Project Coast, and it lasted from 1981 to 1993. The South African National Defense Force created it at a time when the white-minority regime was under increasing threat by indigenous black South Africans. Daan Goosen, the former director of Project Coast's biological research division, told the *Post* he was ordered by Basson to develop ways "to suppress population growth among blacks" and to "search for a 'black bomb,' a biological weapon that would select targets based on skin color."

Goosen and others involved with Project Coast have insisted, at least publicly, that Basson's orders were never carried out. Researchers who have studied the issue are not so sure. According to a 2002 book by Chandré Gould and Peter Folb, *Project Coast: Apartheid's Chemical and Biological Weapons Programme*, there has never been any serious outside

scrutiny of the project's products and "no records are available to confirm that the biological agents were destroyed."

The *Washington Post* even noted, "Goosen says many scientists kept copies of organisms and documents in order to continue work on 'dual-use' projects with commercial as well as military applications." A May 2002 story on Pro-



ject Coast in the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Goosen said he has been "visited by scores of people looking for 'stuff to kill the blacks.'" Race-specific weapons naturally are in hot demand among racists, so it's no surprise that South Africa's race-specific research is highly coveted.

In January 1999, the British Medical Association (BMA) began warning the world of the dangers of ethnic weapons. Although the report, "Biotechnology, Weapons and Humanity," made no direct charge, it said the BMA could no longer ignore the varied reports that such weapons were currently being developed. The report concluded: "Weapons could theoretically be developed which affect particular versions of genes clustered in specific ethnic or family groups." The possibilities of producing such weapons have been enhanced with the 2002 completion of the Human Genome Project.

The 1999 BMA study was provoked in part by a 1998 story in the London *Sunday Times* alleging that Israel already had developed a genetically specific weapon. "Unnamed South African sources,"

according to a report cited by the *Times*, "[say] Israeli scientists have used some of the South African research in trying to develop an 'ethnic bullet' against Arabs." Reported links between Israel's ethnic weapons and South Africa's Project Coast are tentative; some would say tenuous. But the possibility of such links is terrifying, and justifies as much scrutiny as was focused on Iraq's imaginary arsenal.

It also appears that the anthrax incidents of 2001, in which five people died and 13 were sickened, may also have a South African connection. The *Post* noted that officials found evidence in a Frederick, Maryland, pond that may explain how the perpetrators of the deadly attacks used water to handle the lethal toxin without infecting themselves or loosing the anthrax spores.

On May 11, the *Post* said the water theory is the result of the FBI's interest in one person, Steven J. Hatfill, a medical doctor and bioterrorism expert who formerly worked for the U.S. Army, and who lists South African diplomas in diving and underwater medicine on his résumé. A June 2002 article in the *Hartford Courant* reported that Hatfill also worked with a guerilla unit of the white-supremacist Rhodesian army from 1978 to 1980, when "an anthrax outbreak

Weapons could theoretically be developed that affect particular arrangements of genes clustered in specific ethnic or family groups.

killed hundreds and sickened thousands of villagers." He also lived in South Africa, "where he completed various military-medical assignments."

Hatfill's connections to South African and Rhodesian apartheid are much more apparent than his alleged link to the anthrax mailings. But the legacy of Project Coast blurs that distinction considerably. ■

The ABCs of Media Deregulation

By Susan J. Douglas

As soon as most people see the words “duopoly,” “cross-ownership rules,” or “FCC” in the headlines their eyes glaze over. But not my friend and many people’s hero, Bob McChesney. Bob eats memos about telecom regulations for breakfast. He has campaigned tirelessly, along with John Nichols, Mark Crispin Miller, Jeff Chester, and others, for reform of our nation’s media regulatory apparatus.

But I just had a very eye-opening chat with Michael Powell, head of the FCC. And now I realize that Bob is just getting excited over nothing: He doesn’t grasp how progressive and democratic “market forces” can be, and he fails to understand that letting Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation own as many media outlets as possible will ensure that Americans get to hear a true range of diverse voices.

Every time Bob has been on the radio or written yet another exposé about the dangers to democracy of ongoing media consolidation, I have to answer a lot of questions from students and friends. And now that the FCC is about to propose what the *New York Times* called “the most important rewriting of the ownership rules in decades,” some people have become curious about what that means. So let me try, again, to set the record straight.

Is it really true that the staff at the FCC has circulated a proposal that would nearly eliminate the limit on the number of TV stations a network could own?

Yes, the current rule is that no person or company can own stations reaching more than 35 percent of the country. The FCC would raise that to 90 percent.

Ninety percent? Doesn’t that mean that Rupert Murdoch could just go on a big shopping spree and buy scores of TV stations? Doesn’t that mean we’d have “The O’Reilly Factor” all the time? And endless right-wing blondes?

Well, Murdoch gives the people what they want. Besides, the 35 percent ownership cap infringes on Rupert’s free speech rights.

Come again?

Well, it’s true, some misguided people cite Supreme Court rulings, which argue that “the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources” is essential to preserving a public marketplace of ideas. But the 35 percent cap silences and oppresses Murdoch’s News Corporation. It makes it disadvantaged. Of course, convergence will help



rectify such glaring inequalities.

Disadvantaged? I thought disadvantaged referred to, say, a poor person suffering from inadequate educational resources, health care, job opportunities, and housing.

Oh, that’s so ‘60s. Today, disadvantaged refers to a company that has failed to acquire several TV networks, a cable company, production studios, 900 AM and FM stations, various online services, a long-distance telephone company, orbiting satellites, and the planet Jupiter.

What is convergence?

Convergence is like synergy, only better. Synergy is more spiritual (you know, like at AOL Time Warner). Synergy is the transcendental, binding arc of energy that radiates throughout the corporate media when two behemoths in the media industry seek to unite to clobber all known competition. Convergence is what happens in particular markets. And after the FCC has its way with the newspaper broadcast cross-ownership rule, TV stations will be able to buy newspapers in the same market, or vice versa. Murdoch has been the trailblazer here, since he already owns newspapers and TV stations in New York City.

Wait a minute. You mean that I could turn on the local news while leafing through my

newspaper and have them owned and produced by the same people?

Yup. The economies of scale are beautiful.

But look at what Clear Channel has done to radio. Relaxing the ownership caps on radio stations has meant that Clear Channel can own the majority, if not all, of the stations in a town. Then they refuse to play music by artists who won’t pay their promotional fees, and they have actually banned certain bands from some stations. Not only have they totally wrecked radio—oh yeah, and try to get any news from their stations—but then they used all their money to stage those pro-war demonstrations.

Well, that’s free speech and the beauty of competition.

That’s not competition. It’s a government sanctioned oligopoly that benefits the rich. Besides, as Gene Kimmelman of Consumers Union puts it: What if AOL Time Warner had owned the *Washington Post* and the leading TV station in Washington? Would they have covered how AOL falsely inflated its earnings? Kimmelman’s bet is no. What else does this FCC want to do?

Well, right now, there’s a cap—30 percent—on the number of cable systems in the country one entity can own. Who needs it? That just thwarts corporate free speech and competition. There’s the dual network rule, which prevents major networks like ABC or NBC from owning each other—that could go away.

Why have an FCC if it doesn’t impose and enforce regulations?

Michael Powell’s point exactly. Who needs an FCC when you have the market?

These seem like really huge changes. I don’t think ordinary people have any idea that the media could be controlled by even fewer corporations than run the show today. Shouldn’t there be public debate about this?

Michael Powell thinks that would be just silly and irrelevant. He already knows what Rupert wants. And what Rupert wants, Rupert gets. What’s to debate?

What’s Bob McChesney’s phone number again? ■

THE FIRST TO

By Joel Bleifuss

Staging Private Lynch

Who could forget the daring helicopter rescue of Private Jessica Lynch?

"It was a classic joint operation, done by some of our nation's finest warriors who are dedicated to never leaving a comrade behind," said Gen. Vincent Brooks. It was also a classic Hollywood script "made by the Pentagon," according to a May 18 BBC television documentary, *War Spin*.

The BBC presents a convincing case that the rescue of Lynch was a staged propaganda stunt "timed for breakfast shows in America just when the news was bad and the talk was of a long, hard campaign."

Dr. Harith Al-Houssona tells the BBC that he admitted Lynch to Saddam Hospital in Nasiriya when the Iraqi security department brought her there. Contrary to U.S. military reports that she was stabbed and shot, Al-Houssona says that when he examined her, she had a broken arm, thigh and ankle but no other injuries.

The BBC also interviewed a man who, prior to Lynch's "rescue," was questioned by the American military about the location of the hospital and whether it was occupied by Fedayeen irregulars. He told the BBC, "I said, 'No, there aren't any. There is no forces in there or anything.'"

Al-Houssona related what he saw when U.S. soldiers stormed the hospital: "Like a film of Hollywood, they cry, 'Go, go, go!' ... with guns and blanks, without bullets. Blanks and the sound of explosions, and break down the door. We are very scared. They make a show for the American attack for the hospital. Action movies like Sylvester Stallone or Jackie Chan ... with jumping and shouting, breaking the door ... with the photos, with the photos."



CARLO ALLEGRI/GETTY

A BBC documentary raises the question: Was the rescue of Jessica Lynch a staged publicity stunt?

The BBC reports that it asked the Pentagon to release the full videotape of the rescue "to clear up any discrepancies," but it declined.

Co-president dependent

Karl Rove is "co-president of the United States" and it was he who got Bush to go to war in Iraq, writes James C. Moore in the *Los Angeles Times*:

[Rove] looked around and saw that the economy was anemic and people were complaining about the president's inability to find Osama bin Laden. In another corner, the neoconservatives in the Cabinet were itching to launch ships and planes to the Mideast and take control of Iraq. Rove converged the dynamics of the times. He convinced the president to connect Hussein to bin Laden, even if the CIA could not. ... And now, Rove needs the conflict to continue so his client—the president—can retain wartime stature during next year's election. Listen to the semantics from Bush's recent trip to the aircraft carrier Lincoln. When he referred to the 'battle of Iraq,' Bush implied that we only won a single fight in a bigger war that was not yet over.

According to Moore's sources (the Emmy-award-winning television reporter has covered Bush and Rove for more than

20 years), "[Rove] was also reported to be present at a war strategy meeting concerning whether to attack Syria after Iraq. Rove said the timing was not right. Yet."

And in a recent *New Yorker* profile of Rove, Nicholas Lemann puts it this way: "In Washington, Rove gets conversational credit for everything up to and including the war in Iraq, and Democrats, at least, use 'Rove' as shorthand for 'the Bush administration,' as in, 'Is Rove going to invade Syria?'"

Date locally, act globally

"Activism is sexy, activists are sexy, and it's high time that all humans were offered a way to 'take action' while 'getting action,'" says John Hlinko. He is founder of www.ActForLove.org, a new web-based personals site "that directly addresses the disconnect between apathetic youth and the political process by promoting the one thing all young people have in common—their libido."

"If you want to engage activists, why not use the world's oldest form of engagement," says Hlinko, who describes himself as a longtime Internet activist and an even longer-time dater. Personal ads worked for him; he met his girlfriend online.

A veteran of MoveOn.org and JustSayBlow.com, a semi-comedic sally in the drug war, Hlinko says that ActForLove.org will

NICK DIDICK / REUTERS



"Activism is sexy, activists are sexy," says John Hlinko, of ActForLove.org. Above: Anti-Gap protesters in Calgary go bottoms up.

donate a portion of its proceeds to activist efforts, start campaigns for good causes that no one else has championed, and build an "ever-growing network of activist singles and turn them into activist doubles."

ActForLove.org has partnered with Spring Street Networks, a company that manages Web-based personals data bases. ActForLove.org members will have access to personals ads submitted to Salon.com,

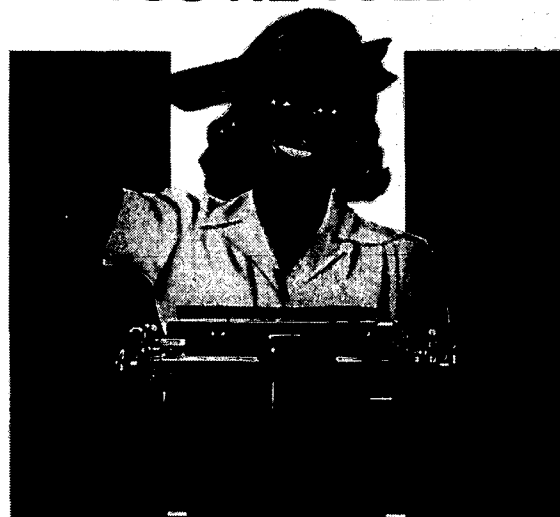
The Onion, *The Village Voice* and Nerve.com, sites that Hlinko says attract "a hipper, left-of-center crowd." His goal: "We are going to help change the face of activism and make it fun."

Anti-fascist remix

Activist Micha Ian Wright borrows the images from government propaganda posters from World War II and adds his

own words. The one shown here originally read, "Victory waits on your fingers—Keep 'em flying, Miss U.S.A." This poster and 39 others, along with images of the originals, can be seen in the just released *You back the attack! We'll bomb who we want!* (Seven Stories), or at www.antiwarposters.com. Wright, an Army veteran, encourages book buyers to photocopy his posters and "glue them all over." ■

**YOU WRITE WHAT
YOU'RE TOLD!**



THANKS, CORPORATE NEWS!
We Couldn't Control The People Without You

A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTRY OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Editorial continued from inside front cover

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) This media-watching group studied the coverage of 56 major nightly newscasts, ABC's *World News Tonight*, CBS's *60 Minutes*, NBC's *Nightly News*, CNN's *World News*, Reuters, Fox's *Special Report*, and PBS's *NewsHour*. *World News Tonight* examined 1,617 on-camera sources appearing in unrelated stories during the height of the war, from March 20 to April 9. Who were these sources?

- 69 percent were current or former government officials.
- 52 percent were Bush administration officials.
- 66 percent were on-camera sources.
- 13 percent were on-camera sources.
- 3 percent of 20 U.S. sources were anti-war.

0 percent of all sources who were invited to have a sit-down on-camera interview were identified as being against the war.

(The prize for the most lopsided coverage goes to CBS's *Evening News*. 75 percent of its sources were officials, and the single anti-war voice it had was a senator, Michael Moore's (last spring).

According to poll, 23 percent of Americans figured out they were being snookered and came out against the war. And, no doubt, many Americans who supported the war did so not because they had been misled it was right, but because they received it as a *fait accompli*.

Overall, that's good news. All of us wanting—and working—to protect American constitutional democracy from a (b)el that we'd play with it should be encouraged that millions of people, citizens who made savvy enough not to be deceived by the administration's distortion of the campaign.

In last issue's "Bursting Bubbles: Why the economy will go from bad to worse," economist Dean Baker examined how the boom economy of the '90s was built on three unsustainable bubbles. One—the

stock bubble—has already burst. The other two bubbles—the dollar bubble and the housing bubble—are still with us, but not for long. These bubbles created the basis for the 2001 recession

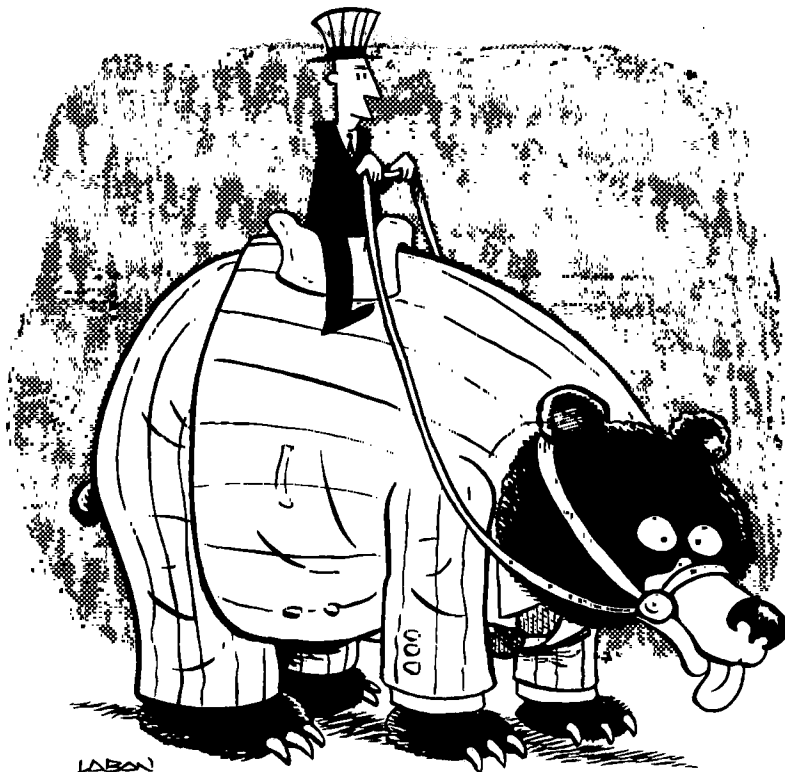
and the economy's continuing period of stagnation.

In this issue, Baker outlines a course of action for progressives to seize the economic agenda.

Economic Fix

How to
salvage a
broken
economy

By Dean Baker



In the years ahead, the basic economic problem confronting us will be how to maintain demand, and therefore employment, as the combined effect of the collapse of the stock and housing bubbles send investment and consumption demand plummeting. The falling dollar will help to stimulate demand, since it will make our exports more affordable elsewhere in the world. At the same time, it will make imports more expensive. This will stimulate the economy by increasing demand for domestically produced goods, but at the same time will lead to somewhat higher inflation, as rising import prices get passed through the economy.

One key policy prescription will be to ignore the inflation. There is no economic harm from a modest rise in the inflation rate (1 to 2 percentage points). The Federal Reserve Board should be forced to accept the higher inflation that will inevitably result from a falling dollar, rather than trying to squeeze out the inflation through a policy of high interest rates, which will raise the unemployment rate.

The second point is that we should not be concerned about near-term deficits when the economy is in a slump. We need these deficits to boost the economy. Large deficits (for example, more than \$250 billion) are a problem when the economy is operating somewhere near its potential output, but bigger

deficits are actually better when the economy needs demand to offset the damage from the collapsing bubbles. Much of this demand will have to come from the government. Firms will be reluctant to invest as long as they have large amounts of excess capacity and the economy seems weak.

Consumers should not be looked to as a source of increased demand because they have already been spending too much and running up too much debt. With tens of millions of baby boomers approaching retirement with almost nothing in the bank, it is essential that consumers increase their savings. In time, foreign demand for U.S. exports can and should be a big boost to the economy, but even after the dollar falls to a sustainable level, it will be several years before trade patterns adjust to reverse the current trade deficit. So, government deficits will be an essential prop to the economy for the near-term future.

Of course, all deficits are not the same. Instead of running deficits to give tax breaks to the rich and dollars to defense contractors, as the Bush administration and the Republican Congress are doing, we should look to orient spending to areas that will

build a sound basis for prosperity in the new century. The dividend tax cut looks almost like a joke in this respect. If the intention is to spur business investment, the tax cut is about the most indirect way imaginable, since it will have at most a limited impact on stock prices—and stock prices have almost no effect on investment apart from the bubble period of the late '90s. By creating a new category of tax-exempt income, the dividend tax cut will be a boon to the tax shelter industry, as the wealthy find ways to hide more of their income as dividend income. Stimulating the tax shelter industry and giving more money to the wealthy are the only plausible motives of such a narrowly targeted tax cut.

On the contrary, extending unemployment benefits and substantial revenue sharing to state and local governments to prevent cutbacks of important services should be no-brainers in the short-term. The longer-term list of neglected needs has many candidates. It is widely recognized that the health care system is broken, with costs spiraling out of control and the quality of care and coverage falling rapidly. Upfront spending to create a universal system comparable to Canada's would quickly be paid back, both in savings to the private sector and in the improved health and security of the population. Similarly, a system of universal child care that guaranteed working mothers decent care for their children would produce large gains for parents and children.

Other top priorities should include rebuilding the nation's transportation system on a more environmentally friendly path. This would include more support for mass transit and also the resurrection of the national train system. An obvious alternative to spending endless billions to protect the air transit system from terrorist attacks is to promote forms of transit, like trains, that don't face the same risk. Support for clean energy sources that are already almost competitive, such as wind energy, can produce large dividends as well.

It would also be good to see the United States actually playing a productive role in promoting world development for a change. In the last few years, the United States has been a massive borrower of capital from the rest of the world. The poor in developing countries are effectively lending money to U.S. consumers to buy the shoes, textiles, computers, and other products that they produce. It would be much better if the loans (or grants) went in the other direction—with the United States providing the capital that these countries need to build their infrastructure and get themselves on a sound footing.

While this list may seem extravagant, there are two points worth keeping in mind. First, many of these items are real investments in the sense that they will produce payoffs, often in the very near-term future. Health care stands out in this respect. A workable system will likely require more money being funneled through the government, but the savings to the private sector would be enormous. If the U.S. health care system were only as efficient as the second most inefficient system in the first world (Germany), it would save the public approximately \$300 billion a year, more than \$4,000 for a family of four. The other proposals will also offer gains that offset the necessary upfront expenses, although the net benefit may not be so overwhelmingly positive.

The second point is simple, but important. People can actually be made poor by too little demand on resources, rather than too much. This was exactly the situation the country faced in the Great Depression. If the government had just paid people to drive around and throw money from car windows, it would have brought an end to the Depression. Eventually, it *did* end the Depression by throwing vast amounts of money at the economy, but the immediate reason was World War II. The economy will be suffering large shortfalls of demand from the collapse of the stock and housing bubbles. While this will appear to be a period of poverty, the idle resources—unemployed workers and excess productive capacity—are actually a source of wealth. In principle, idle workers and excess capacity mean that the economy could be producing more than it actually is. Alternatively, we could put the unemployed to work, and then all work somewhat less, and still have the same output. The fear of short-term deficits should not prevent the country from putting these resources to work.

Finally, it is important to remember how completely the events of the past few years should discredit the existing elite and the U.S. system of corporate capitalism. We now know that

**The exact division between incompetence
and corruption can be sorted out later,
but one thing is clear: The current system
desperately needs to be overhauled.**

corruption and incompetence are the norm at the highest levels of corporate America. The top executives of huge companies like Enron, WorldCom and Global Crossing are desperately trying to convince the public that they had no idea what their companies were doing in order to keep themselves out of jail. The high-powered boards of these companies are all making similar claims of incompetence. The stock analysts, investment fund managers, the business press and the economic and policy analysts somehow all failed to see any signs of this wreckage coming. The exact division between incompetence and corruption can be sorted out later, but one thing is clear: The current system desperately needs to be overhauled. There is no check on the theft and corruption by those at the top.

Since the Reagan era, the rich have used the political system to pillage the U.S. economy with few obstacles in their path. The inability of the rich to contain their own greed has led to the disaster of the triple-bubble economy. The bursting of these bubbles cannot be prevented, but if progressives seize this failure as an opportunity and organize to regain control of Congress and the White House, the future will be much brighter than the past two decades. ■

Dean Baker is co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research. He is also the author of the Economic Reporting Review, a weekly online commentary on the economic reporting in the New York Times and Washington Post, available at www.cepr.net.



Meet Howard Dean

Could he mobilize progressives to oust Bush in 2004?

By David Moberg
Jefferson, Iowa

The tables were nearly filled in the back room of the Uptown Cafe, even before 9 o'clock on a Saturday morning in May. Local Democrats had gathered to begin their long process of sizing up presidential candidates before the statewide caucus next January.

Up front sat 93-year-old Francis Cudahy, a greatly respected local lawyer and party leader known in this neck of the prairie as "Mr. Democrat." He was upset with Bush's war in Iraq, which he saw as an attempt to "impose our philosophy on the rest of the world." Though Bush started the war, in theory, to get rid of weapons of mass destruction, Cudahy said, now they can't be found. "What justification do we have for being over there?" he demands.

Across the table, Mary Garst (of the prominent Iowa seed corn family), decried not only the "horrible arrogance" of Bush's foreign policy but also his "terrible" tax cut plan. "First, the rationale for it is crazy," she says, "but for God's sake, not for the rich people."

They were so far uncommitted to any candidate, but judging from their remarks they were primed for the message Howard Dean, the 54-year-old physician and governor of Vermont for the past 12 years, was about to deliver. Dean attacked Bush for both the war and the tax cuts, as well as those Democrats who failed to resist the administration. He got a solid applause from this crowd of 40 people gathered at the Uptown when he told them, "This

party needs some backbone. I can't tell you how many Democrats I talk to who are as mad at the Democrats as at the Republicans."

In a standard campaign refrain, Dean claims to represent "the Democratic wing of the Democratic party," very occasionally giving a nod to the phrase's originator, the late Sen. Paul Wellstone. Dean, as even he acknowledges, isn't exactly a Paul Wellstone: He lacks Wellstone's coherent vision, close identification with popular movements, and populist passion. But Dean is an increasingly viable candidate who offers much to please Wellstone supporters.

Hardly the sole advocate of progressive views, Dean comes across as an intelligent, affable and knowledgeable candidate with a fresh face but enough experience to have political credibility. Dean tries to convey the technical-assuredness of a New England doctor prescribing the proper remedies. "The doctor is in," his posters announce in the cafes of Iowa.

Dean campaigns as a pro-union environmentalist and sustainable energy enthusiast who will enact a plan to guarantee health insurance for everyone (paid for by rolling back most Bush tax cuts), adopt a more internationalist foreign policy, and insist that international trade agreements enforce labor and environmental protections. But he also takes positions that might make some Wellstone fans uncomfortable. He makes balancing the budget the centerpiece of his economic policy, argues that single-payer national health

insurance can't be passed, and identifies more closely with Clinton's foreign policy than many progressives would like.

The hawkish, pro-corporate Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) was off the mark—both in its reading of history and its mean-spirited rhetoric—when it recently singled out Dean as representing “weakness abroad and elitist, interest-group liberalism at home.”

Dean supported the war in Afghanistan but argues against the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive war. He put it this way: Bush's “foreign policy is, ‘Get out of my way or I’ll see you after school in the parking lot.’ We’re the most feared country in the world, but we’re not the most respected, and that’s something we have to change.”

Real American strength, Dean says, comes from internationalist cooperation on matters such as terrorism, global warming, raising living standards, and bringing greater democracy to the poor countries of the world (whose debts need to be forgiven as much for American security interests as for their own economic growth). Domestically, he proposes a safety net for the “middle class” as well as the poor, guaranteeing that health care, education and affordable housing are available for everyone. That's hardly an “elitist” program, but the DLC attack may reflect the rising political fortunes of this previously little-known governor from the next-to-least most populous state. In one early New Hampshire poll, Dean is tied with Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts for the lead, and he is making a strong showing in Iowa, where he has visited more than 30 times already and has a strong staff.

Dean describes himself as an anti-ideological pragmatist. “I’m not an ideologue,” he said in an interview with *In These Times*. “I think the great problem with this president is that his is an ideological administration. Facts don’t matter to them. I’m a complete pragmatist. I really believe that people who have ideologies that can’t be bent and are insensitive to the facts can’t govern.” He offers an example of his pragmatism. “I used to oppose needle exchange programs [for intravenous drug users], but a Yale study came out that showed very clearly that HIV/AIDS transmission dropped significantly among addicts, and there was not a particularly significant increase in use of heroin. So I changed my position the next day.” He now favors treating drug addiction as a public health problem, not a crime. And when the Vermont Supreme Court forced the issue on him, Dean as governor bucked an ardent right-wing opposition to help pass a state law providing civil unions for gays.

In contrast to the Bush administration, which makes lying a central strategy in pursuit of right-wing objectives, a respect for facts is refreshing. However, Dean's pragmatism sometimes sounds uncomfortably like Michael Dukakis' failed political gambit of promoting “competence” over ideology.

Dean makes a great deal of his record of balancing budgets in Vermont, where he was often at odds with Democratic legislators over spending. He claims to have left the state in better fiscal shape to protect social programs during the current lean times. In the same vein, he makes budget-balancing the heart of

his federal economic policy. That strategy, especially at the federal level, risks exacerbating an economic downturn. Dean says that he would have been willing to run “small deficits” as the economy slumped in 2001, but not exacerbate them with Bush-style tax cuts, most of which he would reverse.

While shunning the standard Keynesian prescription of countering business cycle slumps with budget deficits, Dean argues that the federal government economic stimulus should emphasize investments in infrastructure—expanding broadband communications in rural areas or promoting alternative energy (including wind power)—that continue to generate benefits long after the temporary stimulus effect. In order to encourage public investment, he would maintain separate federal budgets for operating expenses and capital spending. Apart from the relative policy merits of his budget ideas, however, it's not clear that running on balanced budgeting packs much political wallop.

The issue of corporate power is central for any Democratic candidate. In recent decades, corporations have gained influence while people have lost both power on the job and economic security. While Dean doesn't take on corporations with the rhetorical fire of a Dennis Kucinich, he favors tougher corporate regulation, a reduction in corporate subsidies, penalizing companies that move headquarters overseas, and rolling back the ongoing deregulation of the telecommunications industry (a need that Dean says he realized when broadcasters blacklisted the Dixie Chicks for criticizing Bush). On the other hand, Dean wants government to do more to help small businesses: He says it's to promote job growth, but it is also politically smart.

More significantly, Dean—along with Kucinich and Dick Gephardt—strongly advocates making it easier for workers to organize unions, both at home and abroad. “I’ve recently concluded that we ought to allow card check in this country,” Dean says, referring to employer recognition of a union simply when a majority of workers sign membership cards. “It's the only way to unionize places that pay substandard wages that you can't support a family on.”

Dean has made the hawkish, pro-corporate Democratic Leadership Council nervous, which may reflect his rising political fortunes.

Dean embraces unions as vehicles for bringing poor workers into the middle class. “My attitude toward unions is, at a time when the gap between rich and poor is getting bigger and bigger, at a time when the unions in my view have been much more responsible than they were in the '70s and '80s when they were mostly interested in protecting high-wage industrial jobs, they've really gone out of their way to recruit the people who need the help the most,” he says.

Dean rejects privatizing social security, and he argues that the federal government should give refundable tax credits to low-income workers to invest for their retirement. He also proposes drastically

revamping the existing pension system. "Pensions shouldn't be controlled by corporations," he says. "They should be independent, controlled by trustees. Corporations would appoint half of them, and labor would appoint half of them." This would keep corporations from looting pensions, and workers could remain in the same independent pension fund as they change jobs.

Although Dean embraces trade, he maintains that trade agreements need to be rewritten to include labor rights, both to protect American workers' jobs and to promote American defense and international security. "Yes, I like trade," he says. "Trade is very, very good for the world. It's a great part of our defense policy to develop middle-class countries in other parts of the world. Those countries don't go to war with each other, they don't attack us, they don't harbor groups like al-Qaeda. It's a defense issue. My position is, if it's okay for General Motors to send their plant from Dearborn to Matamoros, then it's okay to send the UAW down to organize that plant."

"We need to hook up human rights and trade, environmental standards and trade, by making it a condition of any trade agreement, existing or in the future, that labor standards and environmental standards are put in the agreement and are enforceable in the same way as other violations of trade are enforceable," Dean says. "We could file a claim if there were

ance Program for low-income children (extending it to include parents), provide prescription drug coverage through Medicare, and make health insurance more widely available and affordable for individuals and small employers through a subsidized version of the federal employee health insurance plan.

Kucinich has proposed a universal single-payer system of Medicare. But the plans from Dean, Kerry and Gephardt are all complex programs to subsidize private health insurance. They fail to remove the biggest cost problem: private insurance overhead, profits and inefficiencies. Dean claims that his plan expands coverage as much as Gephardt's but at slightly more than one-third the cost of Gephardt's proposal. He says that overwhelming corporate opposition will kill any single-payer plan. But Dean argues—and polls concur—that given a choice between tax cuts and guaranteed health insurance, most voters will choose health care.

Polls also suggest that Dean's stance against the war may help him. It's unclear, Dean argues, whether six months from now Iraq will be peaceful or in tumult against U.S. occupation. In any case, the issue will be a wash politically, he thinks. "People don't believe that being against the war in Iraq is as Joe [Lieberman] says, a tendency to be weak on defense. The Dean doctrine would be very clear. We have a right to defend ourselves against an immediate threat, an imminent

'My position is, if it's okay for General Motors to send their plant from Dearborn to Matamoros, then it's okay to send the UAW down to organize that plant.'

child labor violations in another country we were doing business with, or overtime violations, or safety violations."

Despite his criticism of corporate behavior, Dean rejects the rhetoric of "class warfare." "I think it's less productive to worry about how much rich people have than to worry about how much middle-class and working people have," he says. "I believe that as long as rich people are around, they'll find ways to get around the rules other people have to follow. That's one of the costs of living in a capitalist system. The thing to do is concentrate on the 90 percent of people who don't have what they need and make sure they have it, and not worry about the people who make \$500,000 a year. Of course, it's obscene, but so what?"

"Rather than attacking executive salaries, which I do agree are a real problem, I want to build a middle-class safety net, so that people in the middle class in this country can be sure they'll have health insurance, can be sure they'll have opportunities for their kids to go to college," he says. Beyond raising the minimum wage, he'd expand fringe benefits subsidized by government, much as he did to some degree in Vermont, including expanded child care, affordable housing, and health insurance.

Although at least four candidates have health insurance proposals, Dean's plan—a central focus of his campaign—is based on his experience in Vermont, where he raised the percentage of Vermonters covered by health insurance from 87.3 percent to 91 percent. He would greatly expand the federal Children's Health Insur-

threat. But we don't have a right to engage in preventive war without an immediate threat being established." In late April, a survey by the Program on International Policy Attitudes showed that more than 75 percent of Americans favored the United States cooperating with other countries to solve problems. These majorities are closer to the position of Democrats like Dean than to Bush or his Democratic apologists.

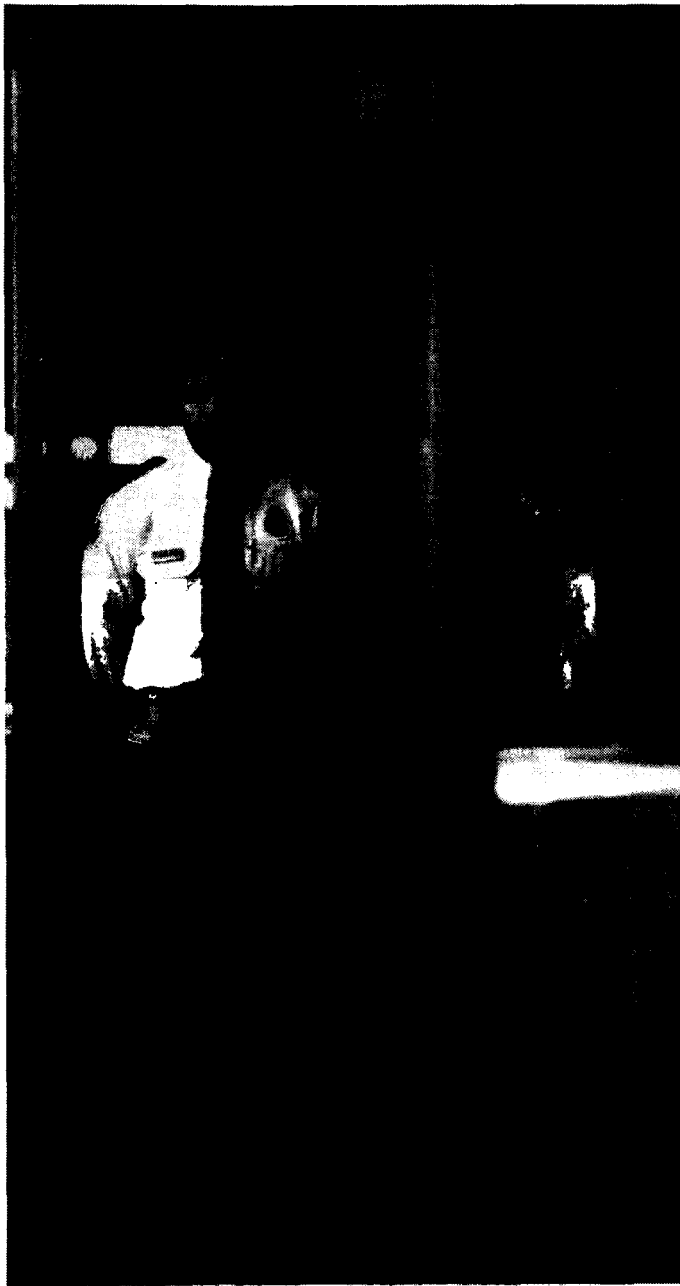
Dean's opposition to the war sets him apart from the supposed frontrunners in the race and from Bush, but on international issues he relies heavily on both Clinton-era advisors and policies like "Drug War" aid to Colombia's government.

Out on the hustings, Dean scores points by faulting Bush's attention to real matters of homeland security. And his measured explanation of why he opposed the war in Iraq gets a respectful listen even from Democrats who supported the war.

Sitting at the same table with Garst and Cudahy, Duane Mosher, a veteran of both Vietnam and Desert Storm who is now a UAW member working at a washing machine factory near Jefferson, says that he supported the war in Iraq but liked Dean's speech, including the candidate's explanation of why he opposed the war. Gast and Cudahy, more closely aligned with Dean's war views, were impressed in an understated Midwestern fashion. "What do you think?" Mary Garst asks, leaning across the table at the close of Dean's talk. "He's pretty good?" Mr. Democrat nods. "I think so." ■

Part one of a special
In These Times series
on civil liberties
and surveillance

What's Your 'Risk Score'? A profiling system for all air travelers is just around the corner



DAVID McNEW/GETTY

By David Jones

In the 20 months since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the airport experience for many Americans has consisted of long and intrusive security lines, paperwork and procedural questions. For a select few, the experience also feels like being the victim of a crime.

After assuming responsibility for airport security, the new Transportation Security Administration, created shortly after 9/11, has spent a lot of time searching little old ladies for contraband and turned airport security checks into a breadline. Ordinary citizens, seasoned business travelers and top airline executives begged the agency to create a system that would ensure weapons-free flying while making law-abiding citizens not feel like criminal suspects. However, based on new legal documents and revelations from several privacy watchdog groups, the solution that TSA has come up with may be even worse.

The TSA is now testing a new generation of its Computer Assisted Passenger Pre-Screening System, or CAPPS II, in a 120-day pilot program with Delta Air Lines. It says the program will help create an airport security system that moves passengers through the airport with increased efficiency, fewer hassles for innocent Americans, and a laser focus on catching potential terrorists. Critics charge that CAPPS II will create a security regime so intrusive and unaccountable that even former Georgia Rep. Bob Barr, known for his right-wing and libertarian views, fears the program could morph into a version of the controversial Total Information Awareness (TIA) program currently being envisioned by the Department of Defense.

"I don't like massive databases on law-abiding citizens," says Barr, who is working as a consultant for the American Civil Liberties Union to reign in the CAPPS II program. "This has the potential to become just that. To become sort of a TIA Lite, as it were."

What worries civil liberties advocates and libertarians alike are proposals offered by the TSA to create risk scores on airline passengers based on a series of undisclosed criteria. According to a notice in the *Federal Register*, the TSA has proposed an "Aviation Security Screening Records" database that would be exempt from several provisions of the 1974 Privacy Act based on national security concerns. In a separate notice, TSA has also proposed a plan to scour multiple government and commercial databases in search of passenger data that could screen out potential terrorists before they board commercial flights.

In late February, the TSA entered into a \$12.8 million con-

tract with Lockheed Martin to build a computer system that would link the reservations systems of all major airlines operating in the United States. Under the CAPPS II plan, airline passengers would be asked to provide their date of birth, which would be matched against the current name, address and telephone number (located in the "passenger name record") of every person who buys a ticket for a commercial flight in the United States. Using those four elements, a central computer system would scour outside commercial and government databases and create a risk score based on an algorithm. "The only criteria is who would be more likely to be a foreign terrorist," says Brian Turmail, spokesman for the TSA.

Each passenger would be given a color code based on their risk, with low-risk passengers designated green and allowed to go directly to the gate; medium-risk passengers would be designated yellow and given an extra bag check or handheld wand search for contraband. High-risk passengers would be designated red and detained by law enforcement, and could be interrogated and prevented from boarding their flight. TSA officials say that unless a passenger is considered a risk, their data will be erased as soon as they complete their flight, and that any information on high-risk passengers will be handed over to law enforcement authorities.

Officials at the American Civil Liberties Union and the Electronic Privacy Information Center say the disclosure of this data is a good first step, but argue that many more troubling questions remain. For example, there has been no public disclosure about which databases would be used, what criteria would be used to determine the scores passengers receive, at what point a traveler would be determined a risk, and what mechanism exists for travelers to remove themselves from the "high-risk" list. Official TSA announcement of the

program, made in February, also contradicted earlier public testimony by TSA Chief Administrator James Loy that he would support a voluntary "trusted traveler" program, which would allow travelers to speed through airport security if they voluntarily agreed to undergo an extensive background check and carried a card with a digital fingerprint or other biometric identifier.

Opposition to the CAPPS II program has not been restricted to civil liberties groups. In March, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), one of the leading opponents of the TIA program, introduced an amendment to a federal air cargo bill that would give Congress greater oversight over the CAPPS II program. The amendment would also require the TSA to answer many of the key questions raised by the ACLU and EPIC. He expresses concern that the proposed CAPPS II program "could be an open-ended fishing expedition" if not reigned in by Congress.

ACLU and EPIC representatives point to dozens of erroneous detentions and searches of innocent passengers that have occurred under the TSA's current system of profiling passengers. The mistakes were uncovered only after a series of lawsuits filed under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) forced the TSA to reveal how the current CAPPS system has operated since the fall of 2001. "These [errors] are very, very significant," says Mihir Kshirsagar, policy analyst at EPIC. "It really is profoundly disturbing that the government would operate a list like this in such a clearly shoddy manner."

Documents released to EPIC reveal for the first time the history of the two lists, a "no-fly" list and a "selectee" list, the TSA has operated under the current CAPPS system. An October 2002 memo outlines changes made in the fall of 2001 regarding how the TSA manages the lists: "Since November 2001, the

Racial Profiling in the Air

On November 3, 2001, Jehad Alshrafi, an American of Jordanian descent, arrived at Boston Logan Airport to board American Airlines flight 181 to Los Angeles. He was issued a boarding pass and cleared security without incident, and proceeded to the gate to await his flight.

However, when he arrived at the gate, Alshrafi was paged and instructed to meet an American gate agent, who was accompanied by a U.S. marshal, and was told that the pilot had denied him boarding on the flight. After repeated questioning, he was informed that other passengers had complained to the pilot, who in turn decided not to allow him to board, according to court records filed with the Department of Transportation (DOT). Alshrafi then displayed a U.S. passport and a work identification badge and informed the agent that he had a top secret clearance from the U.S. Department of Defense. The gate agent and the U.S. marshal had another conversation with the pilot. But Alshrafi was still denied boarding. He was later allowed to fly first class on another flight that connected to Los Angeles via Chicago.

According to court documents and government records, this incident was not an isolated case: In the months after the September 11 terrorist attacks, dozens of complaints were filed with the DOT by passengers, and in some cases airline pilots, who were denied boarding, allegedly because airline employees or other passengers were afraid to fly with Muslims or Arabs. Several complaints against American Airlines were deemed to be so serious that on April 25 the DOT filed a complaint against the airline, following a year-long investigation of 10 separate complaints. The airline had removed or denied boarding to passengers who were Arab or Muslim or thought to be such, including Hispanic-Americans.

"Secretary Mineta, from the beginning, said profiling is not acceptable and was not going to happen," says Kareem Shora, legal advisor for the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, which initiated several of the complaints in the DOT complaint. "It shows you the DOT did try to do the right thing. They found there was a violation of the rules, and they tried to have American correct them. It wouldn't budge, and they're going to correct them."

The actions followed a series of warnings sent out to the airlines in the weeks after the September 11 terrorist attacks, in which the DOT advised commercial airlines about how to properly screen passengers who may be from Middle Eastern or Muslim countries. DOT officials say there have been complaints against other airlines alleging discrimination, but the investigation of American found the facts and substance of these alleged incidents added up to a tangible problem. "These did seem to indicate a possible violation," says DOT spokesman Bill Mostley. The DOT is seeking a fine of \$65,000 and a cease-and-desist order against the carrier.

American Airlines spokesman Jim Wagner vehemently denies the allegations, saying the airlines "were following the directives of the president and the attorney general to be vigilant" after the September 11 attacks. Wagner said this type of vigilance helped prevent further tragedy during the Richard Reid shoe bomb incident in December 2001, when he tried to take down American flight 63 from Paris to Miami.

"The potential for abuse is very much out there," says Shora. "It depends on who has access to this list, how those individuals are trained. There are so many questions surrounding this."

[Federal Aviation Administration]/TSA 'watchlist' has expanded almost daily as [intelligence community] agencies and the Office of Homeland Security continue to request the addition of individuals to the no-fly and selectee lists."

The next section of the memo is redacted. It then continues: "Although TSA compiles the lists from requests made by IC agencies, the airline companies are responsible for implementing the security directives that support the two lists."

After further redactions, the memo goes into the background of the watch list system, stating: "Between 1990 and September

**'It really is profoundly
disturbing that the
government would operate
a list like this in such
a shoddy manner'**

11, 2001, the FAA issued several security directives (SDs) and companion emergency amendments (EAs) that identified persons whom air carriers could not transport, because they were determined to pose a direct threat to U.S. civil aviation. ... On September 11, 2001, only three of these SDs were in effect, with a total of [redacted] names of individuals that air carriers were prohibited from transporting."

However, the existing federal screening had a major hole, according to security experts. There was no reason under the existing procedures to place many of the September 11 hijackers onto a watch list. Many had clean records, criminal and otherwise, since coming to the United States. The government also lacked the ability to wade through the millions of passengers who flew commercial flights to detect any unusual travel patterns. But the security system created after 9/11 requires airlines to wade through almost every passenger whose name sounds like a potential terrorist.

In more documents released by EPIC, a letter from an FBI agent to Undersecretary of Transportation John Magaw describes how a woman was denied access to flights at Newark International Airport in 2002 because her name was similar to an alias used by an Australian man who was on the TSA watch list. EPIC documents also show dozens of other complaints to congressional representatives, to the airlines or to the TSA.

More troubling than the erroneous detentions are a series of incidents that some critics consider the ultimate weapon of a rogue government agency. On multiple occasions in 2002, airport security officials detained or strip-searched government watchdogs, peace activists or other groups that could be considered opposed to Bush administration policy (see "Who's on the No-Fly List?" December 23, 2002). On several occasions, the federal government previously denied the no-fly and selectee lists even existed. Further, when these individuals tried to get information from TSA and the FBI about why they were detained, they got little more than cursory apologies and no

explanations regarding the criteria that had been used to put them on any watch list, or how they could be removed.

In April, the ACLU of Northern California filed suit on behalf of two peace activists who were detained in August 2002 while trying to board an American Trans Air flight from San Francisco to Boston. Jan Adams and Rebecca Gordon, who publish the anti-war publication *War Times*, were trying to visit relatives when a supervisor at the check-in counter told them they were listed on the no-fly list and local police were called. After questioning police, the women each had a large "S" printed on their boarding passes, which alerts gate agents that passengers should undergo a second extensive screening before boarding their flight.

After Adams and Gordon filed a FOIA request, the FBI wrote back saying it had "no records pertinent" to their detainment. The TSA never responded to requests the two made regarding the detainment. Meanwhile, after filing a similar request with the San Francisco Airport, the women's attorney learned that between September 2001 and March 2003, 339 people were detained or searched at the airport due to the "no fly" and "selectee lists."

Gordon says while the government has to take steps to protect airline passengers, there is no excuse for the methods being used. "This kind of harassment of people doesn't make any of us safer," she says.

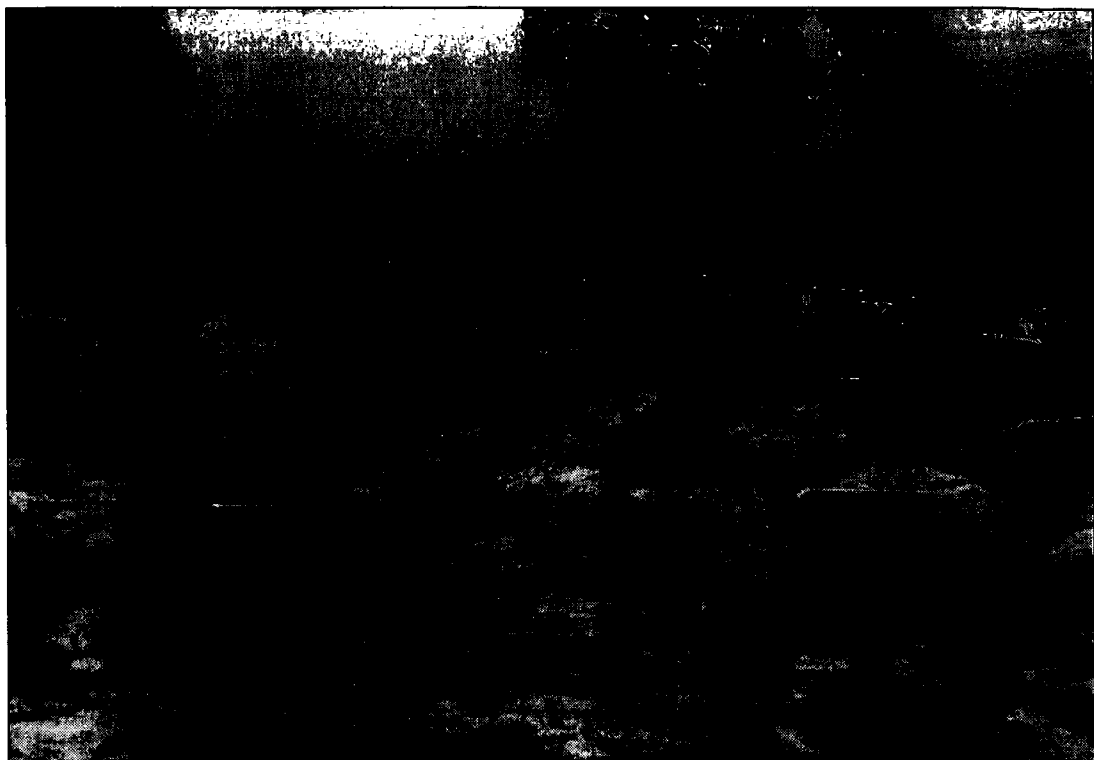
Barbara Olshansky, assistant legal director of the Center for Constitutional Rights—a New York-based organization that has fought the Bush administration on detainees at Guantanamo Bay, secret immigration hearings and other post-9/11 issues—was strip-searched on three different occasions by National Guard troops in 2002. Olshansky claims that a TSA official, who didn't disclose his name, admitted to her during a phone call that TSA keeps some political groups on the watch list at the request of law enforcement and security agencies. TSA spokesman Turmail, however, says the CAPPS system is not capable of screening out political groups, and can only screen individual passengers.

Olshansky says she filed a FOIA request in March, but does not expect to get a response. CCR earlier this year had threatened to file suit over the searches. And the ACLU has been gathering complaints from airline passengers, which may be developed into a class-action suit. In response to some of these criticisms, TSA has released a toll-free number that passengers can call to request their names be removed from the no-fly list.

TSA will have an uphill battle convincing privacy advocates that information gathered during passenger screenings will be protected from abuse by unauthorized persons or agencies. The agency will also have to prove to the Bush administration that the anticipated program will actually work: Mark Forman, associate director at the Office of Management and Budget, recently testified that TSA had so far failed to make a case that CAPPS II could actually screen out high-risk passengers. Only time and a convincing series of tests will determine whether CAPPS II goes forward. ■

David Jones is a Newark, New Jersey-based writer and a 2003 recipient of the George Washington Williams Fellowship for Journalists of Color, sponsored by the Independent Press Association.

*For 20 years,
the Tamil
Tigers have
fought a
vicious,
separatist
war against
the Sri Lankan
government.
Can a
tenuous
ceasefire last?*



MATTHEW POWER

"Martyrs' cemetery" for the Black Tigers, the Tamil suicide bomber elite.

The Buddha's TEARDROP

By Miranda Kennedy and Matthew Power

JAFFNA, SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka's newly renamed "Highway for Peace and Unity" is a cratered strip of asphalt that runs 100 miles due north to Jaffna, straight through the heart of Tamil Tiger country. The road is lined with thousands of unexploded landmines and the charred stumps of palmyra trees. Just off the highway, behind a fence of twisted barbed wire, glass-wing butterflies and blue magpies dance among the rusting hulks of tanks and armored personnel carriers. Skull-and-crossbones landmine warnings, ominously grinning mementos, are placed every 50 feet.

For 20 years this road has been closed to the Sri Lankan public, as the secessionist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fought a brutal war for a separate Tamil state in the country's

northeast. The road's opening in February 2002 was a huge step in reconnecting the divided country. But one suspects the government committee that settled on the highway's name inhabits a world of either naïve hopefulness or dark irony.

In February, Sri Lanka celebrated one year of ceasefire. But the peace talks have been mired in acrimony and mutual distrust after a series of setbacks, including an incident in March when the Sri Lankan navy blew up an LTTE vessel, killing 11 "Sea Tigers." Throughout the ceasefire, both the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) and the LTTE continued to recruit soldiers and stockpile arms. The LTTE says the government has done nothing to resettle Tamils displaced by the war, and the Tamil people have yet to see the dividends of peace. In late April, the LTTE unilaterally pulled out of peace talks. Guns have not yet been fired, but the country is once again poised for war.

The mostly Hindu Tamils are the largest minority in this mostly Sinhalese and Buddhist country. South of India, the teardrop-shaped island of Sri Lanka was once an idyllic tourist haven, with long beaches, tropical jungles, and the ruins of ancient Buddhist cities. More than 64,000 lives were lost in two decades of conflict, out of a population of only 20 million. Now many Sri Lankans call the island "the Buddha's teardrop."

Relentless shelling rendered much of northern Sri Lanka a no-man's-land and crippled the Sri Lankan economy, but it did not bring the Tigers autonomy. Although the LTTE holds some territory, it never regained control of the Jaffna peninsula on the island's northern tip, taken by the army in 1995.

When the LTTE—notorious for car-bombing, political assassination, and suicide attacks on civilian targets—first agreed to holster its guns and discuss alternatives to its chief aim of a separate Tamil state, the group shocked Sri Lanka. But after the United States, Britain and India added the Tamil Tigers to their lists of foreign terrorist organizations, the LTTE realized world public opinion was shifting against them. Their main source of funds from Indian Tamils and the Tamil diaspora became largely inaccessible, frozen in accounts in Britain and India.

Teitur Torkelsson, spokesman for the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission overseeing the ceasefire, believes 9/11 was a turning point for the Tigers. "The international environment no longer has tolerance for armed conflict," he says. "What the LTTE very much longs for is international recognition. And you cannot have that now with an armed struggle—especially when it uses suicide bombing techniques, child recruitment or any other violation of human rights."

After Sri Lanka gained its independence from Britain in 1948, the newly democratic state began discriminating against the mostly Hindu Tamil people, who make up 18 percent of the island's population. The state made Sinhala the sole official language, forced many Tamils out of government jobs, and began regular attacks on Tamils. To Villupillai Prabakaran, a teen-aged smuggler and car thief, an independent Tamil state was the only option. So in 1976, he and his friends, steeped in the revolutionary theory of Che Guevara and Ho Chi Minh, founded the LTTE.

The conflict exploded in 1983, when hundreds of Tamil civilians were killed in state-sanctioned pogroms after the Tigers ambushed an SLA patrol. The slaughter helped win widespread support for Prabakaran's armed struggle. Under his military direction from deep inside the northern jungles, the LTTE quickly established itself as one of the most brutally efficient guerrilla groups in the world.

The north of Sri Lanka is made up of lush, arable wetlands and jungles lapped by the ocean and seared by an equatorial sun. It is perfect land for cultivating rice, coconuts and bananas, and for fishing in the Indian Ocean. As the Tigers discovered, it is also

ideal guerrilla territory. With homemade plastic explosives and tanks captured from the SLA, the LTTE managed to beat back government forces again and again. Despite the SLA's modern armored personnel carriers, helicopter gunships, and multibarrel rocket launchers—and despite assistance to Sri Lanka from Indian and even U.S. forces—the LTTE has caused immeasurable destruction against the state. In July 2001, they virtually attacked the country's international airport, blowing up half its commercial fleet as it sat on the tarmac.

At the sixth and latest round of peace talks, the LTTE hoped the Tamils would be assured of regional autonomy. Anton Balasingham, the LTTE's chief negotiator, has repeatedly staked the success of the peace talks on three demands of the Tigers: official recognition of the Tamil homeland, nationality and right to self-determination. But the question that dogs the LTTE is whether it can transform from a cultlike terrorist organization into a mainstream political entity.

In the Sinhalese-majority south, many find the idea of Prabakaran becoming a legitimate politician laughable. Prabakaran is wanted in India for orchestrating the assassination of former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. In November, he



On the road in Sri Lanka.

was convicted in absentia to 200 years in prison by a Sri Lankan court for a 1996 attack on the Central Bank of Colombo, which killed nearly 100 people. Interpol has also issued an alert for Prabakaran's arrest. He has consolidated his power for almost 30 years by eliminating rival groups and establishing a cult of personality that borders on deification.

At the Tigers' first press conference in almost two decades—after signing the 2002 ceasefire agreement—Prabakaran claimed he and his organization were democratizing. For the first time in years, he said, they were meeting with other political organizations and explaining their actions to the Sri Lankan government. Many involved in the peace talks say that despite the stops and starts, Sri Lanka simply has to believe the Tigers are able to change.

"The LTTE has taken actions in the past which are fascistic and terroristic in nature, there are no two ways about that," says Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, an advisor to the peace talks. "The challenge to the LTTE is whether they can make that transition, or whether that process is too painful and leads to self-destruction. But what is important is to yoke the two sides into a just and peaceful political settlement."

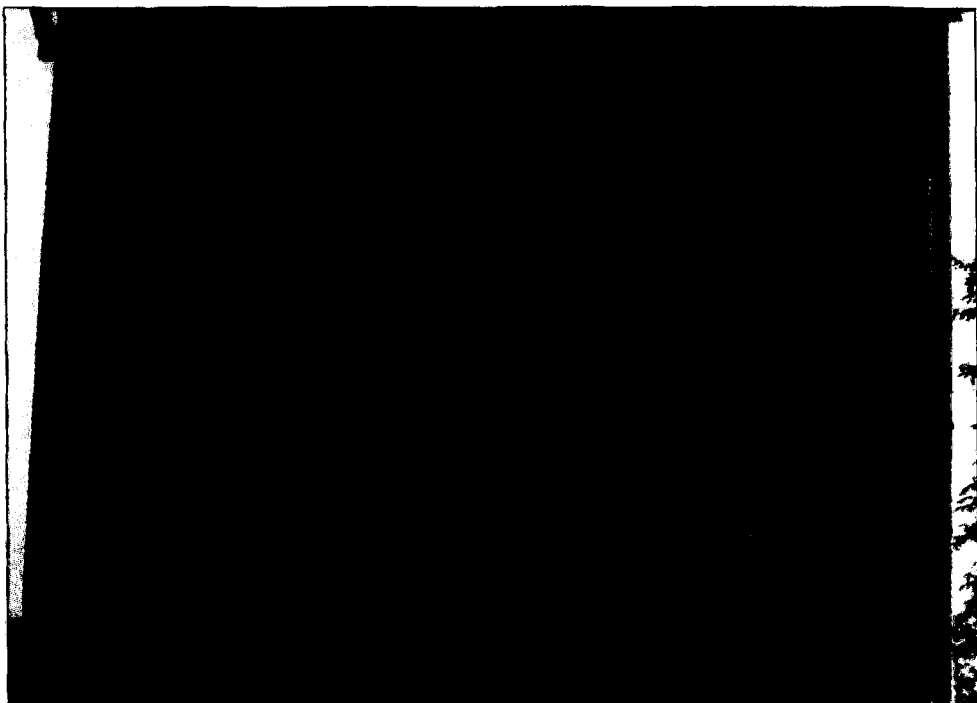
The territory of the Tamils cuts a boomerang-shaped swath across the north and east of the island. The Tamil people say they have inhabited this land since 237 B.C. "The Sinhalese community has no legitimate power over the Tamils, neither by conquest nor by consent," according to Father Bernard, a Tamil Catholic priest in Jaffna. "We were an independent nation, we had our kings and our kingdoms before the British came. So it's a matter of regaining a lost territory." Like many, Bernard initially opposed the Tamils taking up arms. But the mass torture, rape and disappearing of Tamil youth by Sri Lankan forces in the '80s and '90s convinced him otherwise. "If the language of nonviolence is not understood, then we are forced to speak a language that is understood," he insists.

Amnesty International has repeatedly condemned both the Tigers and the Sri Lankan government for human rights violations. In Jaffna, Cerlil Vilsami is still waiting for the return of his son, who has been missing since the SLA detained him over five years ago: "He must be here, I think, but we don't know where. The government is not giving us any answers. What are we to do?" After Vilsami's son disappeared, his daughter joined the LTTE to avenge her brother. She was killed in battle six months later.

But the civilian population of northern Sri Lanka continues to suffer the most from the fallout of war. The local infrastructure has been completely destroyed. More than 200,000 people have fled the country to live as refugees in India or the West. Almost a million Sri Lankans, mostly fishermen and farmers, have been internally displaced by the war. Many can't return to their land because of unexploded ordnance; others have had their land expropriated by the SLA for so-called High Security Zones. Some have been living in refugee camps for more than a decade. The Jaffna peninsula is now a web of SLA military installations, with 40,000 troops keeping a lid on the heart of Tamil culture.

The train line stops just south of the Tamil region. To cross into rebel-held territory, you must pass through a series of high security SLA checkpoints, flanked by machine gun stands. Troops wielding Kalashnikovs unload every passenger from commuter buses to check their papers. They hold up trucks for hours to empty out their cargoes of lumber or rice. This is the beginning of the Highway for Peace and Unity.

Half a mile down the road, the trucks have to unload their cargo all over again at the LTTE checkpoint. Although there is



Mission accomplished: suicide propaganda.

no pretense of peace or unity at the checkpoint, there are also no guns. The slim, young Tamil border guards wear Madras shirts and chinos, or belted shirts and trousers for the women. They look like particularly fastidious college students. You would never guess that they are one of the most feared and ruthless guerrilla armies in the world.

Once you pass through the LTTE checkpoint, you leave Sri Lanka and enter Tamil Eelam, the unofficial nation the Tigers have created. Tamil Eelam runs on a different time zone (Indian time); they have their own Tamil police force, jails, judicial system, and semi-extortionate system of tax collection. Recently the Tigers inaugurated the first Bank of Tamil Eelam. Everyone here is Tamil, and everyone is working for the LTTE movement. Hand-painted propaganda posters dot the scarred landscape. One billboard depicts the two choices the LTTE claims Tamil women have: being raped and murdered by Sri Lankan soldiers or joining the Tiger movement, armed with a Chinese-made T-56 in the jungle.

In true Maoist fashion, the Tigers are masters of propaganda. Only since the ceasefire have they begun to speak to the media; visits to their jungle training camps are still completely out of the question, and minders follow journalists wherever they go.

When you do speak to the Tiger cadres, they have the eerie habit of repeating each other, and constantly refer to "our leader," meaning Prabakaran.

"If our leader says war there is war, and if he says peace, there is peace," asserts Thami Larasu, a tall, shy 22-year-old in the LTTE's political wing. The Tigers speak of Prabakaran in almost godlike terms. In fact, organized religion is discouraged, and every morning, Tiger cadres salute an image of Prabakaran while reciting the LTTE pledge. Their flag is like a post-apocalyptic high school football banner: a roaring tiger backed by a pair of crossed Kalashnikovs, pouncing with claws bared from a cartoonish explosion.

Ask anyone in Tamil territory what makes the Tigers effective, and they will make the same gesture: They clutch an imaginary vial around their neck. Even after one year of ceasefire, the mandatory ornament of every LTTE member is a vial of cyanide on a necklace. If captured alive, they will bite on the cyanide

per" with Prabakaran. After their rice and curry, they pose for a snapshot with the leader. The photo memorializing them is hung on the wall of martyrs that night, even before they blow themselves up. There is no going back.

The Tigers videotape and archive everything for fundraising and recruiting: lost battles and failed suicide missions as well as military victories. They create videos of each Black Tiger before they are sent to their death. These "memory tapes" are surreal music videos starring the suicide-bomber-to-be. The Black Tigers, in LTTE uniform, pose in the grass or smile coyly back at the camera from a boat, the wind ruffling their hair, soft music dubbed over the soundtrack. What follows is a hand-held video clip of the human torpedo carrying out his or her deadly mission.

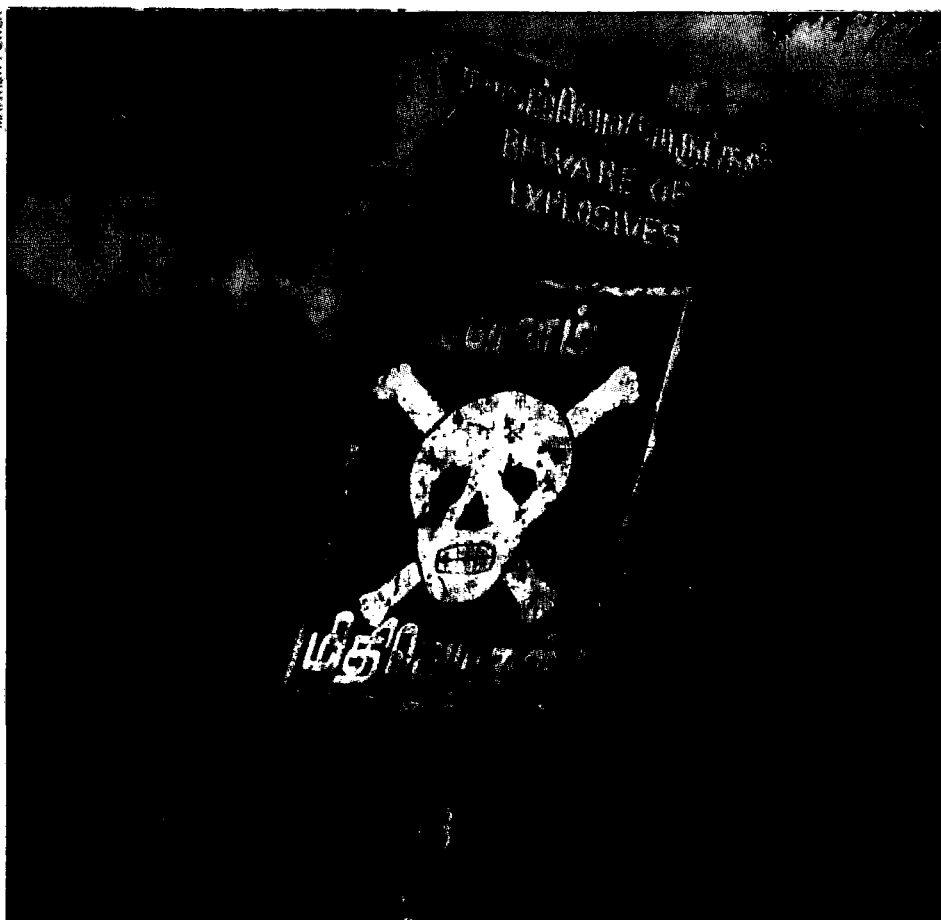
One of the LTTE's greatest military strengths is its unnerving discipline. Drinking and smoking are banned on pain of expulsion, and love affairs are forbidden before the age of 25 for women and 28 for men. A militant Maoist version of feminism also characterizes the Tigers. Unlike in Sri Lanka proper, dowry is illegal in Tamil Eelam. Adultery and rape are considered the worst of crimes, and are punishable by death. In Tamil Eelam, four men have been executed for rape in the past several years. Every Tamil will remind you that whatever atrocities the Tigers are guilty of, rape is not one of them.

In the LTTE "martyrs' cemetery" in Kilinochchi, thousands of markers line the ground. Most of the graves are without bodies, and none mentions the birth date of the fighter. The LTTE says more than 17,600 Tigers have been killed. Sitting under a tree near the graves of his comrades, Larasu explains that he joined the movement when he was 16, after his school was shelled by Indian forces. Like most Tigers, he says he joined voluntarily. The LTTE leadership claims that the Sri Lankan forces did most of their recruiting for them. Many women say it was the rape and torture of their family members that drove them to the LTTE as teenagers, or younger.

But in the south, it is rumored that the LTTE has doubled the size of its forces since the ceasefire began. And in villages across rebel-held Sri Lanka, parents whisper of their children being coerced or forced to join the LTTE. Few dare to speak of child recruitment publicly. UNICEF has

recorded 700 complaints of child conscription since the ceasefire came into effect, though there is little it can do to change the practice.

The fallout of a war that has trained a generation of children to kill will be felt on this island for decades to come. In Kilinochchi, the wooden markers of the Black Tigers' empty graves bleach in the sun to the color of bone. ■



The Highway for Peace and Unity.

capsule, dying in two minutes of unimaginable pain.

The suicide culture of the Tigers is clearly what drives its success. Military analysts believe that terrorist groups like al-Qaeda have studied the tactics of the LTTE, especially their ruthless use of suicide bombers, or Black Tigers. Becoming a Black Tiger is considered the highest of honors by the LTTE. The night before they embark on their mission, the Black Tigers eat their "last sup-

The Next Chapter

By Damien Jackson

If rap is to stand as not only the most significant cultural movement of our time but one of history's most salient, and I believe it will, hip hop generationers both inside and outside of the rap music industry must rise to the challenge. All the components for a mass political movement in our lifetime are in place and functioning—but separate. Do we dare join them together?"

Hearing his own words read aloud, Bakari Kitwana flashes a brilliant smile that momentarily belies his bespectacled, professorial visage. "Those are the final lines from the last chapter," acknowledges Kitwana, author of the briskly-selling *The Hip Hop Generation* and a former political editor for hip hop magazine *The Source*. On break from speaking engagements, the 36-year-old writer sits at a table with folded hands in a room at Chicago's Third World Press, where he once worked.

Kitwana's eyes narrow. "We have a good deal of local activism going on around the country," he says, noting "an emerging group" of moneyed athletes, political figures and entertainers partial to hip hop culture—exemplified by such individuals as NBA star Allen Iverson, Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick and producer/artist Sean "P. Diddy" Combs—who could "serve as a financial influence by contributing to political campaigns in much the same way that the Hollywood industry has been effective in years past." Unfortunately for now, says Kitwana, "these components are all separate."

Kitwana's invitation to America's black youth—his "generation" roughly refers to those born between 1965 and 1984, inside and outside of the hip hop industry—effectively sets the tone for the next chapter in hip hop activism. It's a chapter already being written.

In New York, a media boycott labeled the "Turn Off the Radio" campaign is underway. Chuck D of

Public Enemy, rap duo Dead Prez and the New York-based National Leadership Alliance have joined with several artists and community leaders to target media entities that allegedly disparage blacks. Each Thursday, for a 12-hour block, participants refrain from listening to radio and TV stations that broadcast a disproportionate share of offensive material.

Also in New York, top artists gathered at a "Hip Hop State of Emergency" forum to address negative media portrayals and draw attention to an increase in FBI surveillance measures and police investigations of artists. (For more on this, see Salim Muwakkil's "Hip Hop Hysteria" in the January 20 issue of *In These Times*, and *The Source* magazine's March issue titled "Hip Hop Under Attack.")

In California's Bay Area, radio station KMEL-FM—a former local vehicle gobbled up by the massive Clear Channel Communications network—found itself the target of a recent study conducted by the Youth Media Council, a group promoting accountability in media. According to the study, which monitored three weeks of programming at the station, KMEL's non-music content was dominated by

crime, drugs and violence that blamed youths while locking local youth leaders and their perspectives out. Talks between the station and the Community Coalition for Media Accountability—a larger group that includes the Youth Media Council—are ongoing. "Folks usually don't relate to hip hop as a medium for challenging media," says Malkia Cyril, the Council's director. "But I think we've played a significant role in instituting this practice."

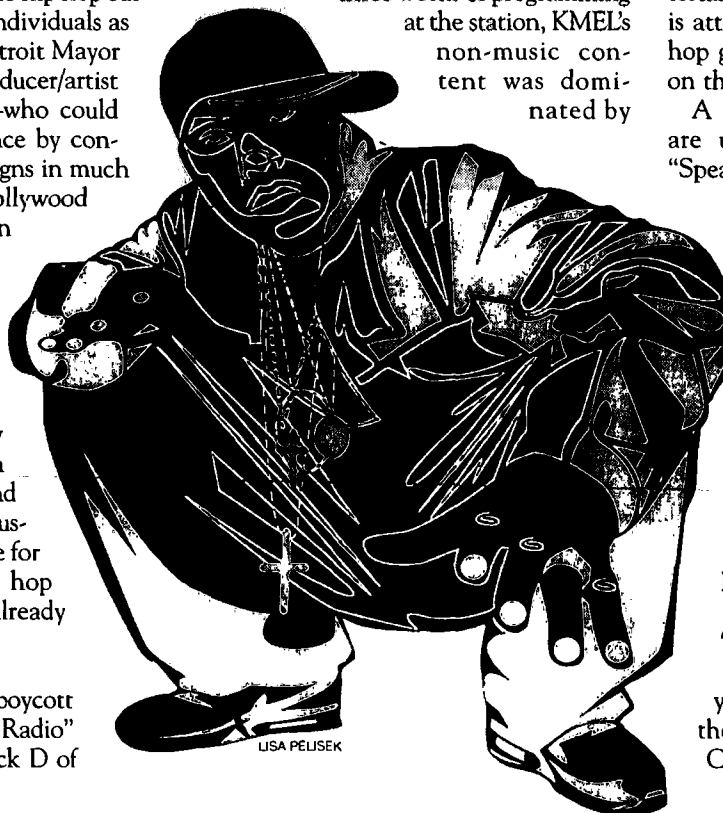
There's been a proliferation of college forums discussing the intersection of hip hop and activism, including the recent week-long "Global Flows" conference at Duke University, which brought together such figures as Davey D, a DJ and journalist, and Minister Paul Scott, an outspoken critic of the violence, materialism and misogyny in commercial hip hop. In March, the Bay Area was the setting for "Constant Elevation," a forum devoted to aligning hip hop activists and causes with potential philanthropic supporters. One of the more established forums includes the annual "Hip Hop as a Movement Conference" held last month at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

In Philadelphia, 30-year-old Will Mega—a local activist and a former member of the New Black Panther Party who, four years ago, made national news as a contestant on the reality show *Big Brother*—is attempting to galvanize that city's hip hop generation around his bid for a seat on the City Council.

A number of national speaking tours are underway as well, including the "Speak Truth to Power Tour," which touts such figures as rap artist Boots Riley of The Coup and writer and radio personality Rosa Clemente. The tour is addressing issues ranging from the "war on terror" to reparations for slavery.

During the conflict with Iraq, anti-war sentiment was plentiful, although the mainstream media steered clear of the numerous anti-war songs, poems, concerts and messages of such artists as Mos Def, Saul Williams, Michael Franti, Paris and KRS One.

"Historically, all movements have developed from the youth," says T.J. Crawford, head of the Chicago Hip Hop Political Action Committee and city manager of



Rolling Out UrbanStyle Weekly, an African-American magazine serving 19 cities across the nation. "Nowadays, hip hop is the culture we're celebrating, so it naturally becomes the latest vehicle for youth empowerment."

"It was mostly young people that made up the civil rights movement," agrees Clemente, who promotes hip hop culture "as a tool of resistance." The New York-based activist devised the "Speak Truth to Power Tour" as a vehicle for young voices of color to oppose war, highlight the plight of domestic political prisoners, and promote self-determination.

But as Clemente and Crawford both know, mass movements also have historically developed out of an emerging collective consciousness. The question for the hip hop generation is whether it has attained a level of consciousness that will demand and facilitate economic and political empowerment on a national level. "I think the key thing to remember when it comes to politicizing the hip hop generation, is that this generation, by nature, is already political," says Kitwana. "They've been politicized by the public policies of the '80s and '90s. You don't have to tell a hip hop kid that police brutality is an issue when he's probably gotten knocked upside the head by a cop before."

"Activism is why hip hop came about," says Davey D. For the past eight years, the Oakland-based DJ has operated one of the largest Web sites on hip hop and politics in the nation, Davey D's Hip Hop Corner (www.daveyd.com). He explains that the culture "was a reaction to the economic and social conditions" of the '70s, and that many of its pioneers "had an activist mindset." He cites the example of legendary artist Afrika Bambaataa, who used hip hop culture as a way of stemming gang violence in his Bronx neighborhood.

For almost three decades, hip hoppers have steered attention and money to causes both local and national. While local efforts—like Bambaataa's anti-gang violence mission, and even the much-maligned MC Hammer's work with finding jobs for ex-inmates—have often flown under the radar, several national efforts have received significant press.

Rush Communications CEO and hip hop mogul Russell Simmons convened Rap the Vote 2000, an initiative geared at increasing the electoral participation and civic activism of the hip hop community.

Though poorly planned and less than successful, it did not deter Simmons' newfound penchant for politics. In 2001, he brought together rap artists, music executives and a host of community leaders, activists and political figures for a hip hop summit in New York City. From this forum emerged the Hip Hop Summit Action Network (HSAN) which immediately gained prominence by joining

All the pieces are in place for the "hip hop generation" to forge a powerful, national political movement.

with the United Federation of Teachers and the Alliance for Quality Education to protest proposed cuts to the city's education budget. A number of prominent artists including P. Diddy, LL Cool J, Jay-Z, Chuck D and Alicia Keys took to the streets with more than 100,000 students, parents and teachers to successfully oppose \$1.2 billion in cuts to an already inadequate schools budget.

In February, Simmons and HSAN officially joined the anti-war movement by throwing its support behind Musicians United To Win Without War, an all-star segment of the national Win Without War coalition. And in April, HSAN and the NAACP drew 15,000 people to Detroit to take part in a hip hop summit that pledged to register 20 million new voters over the next five years.

Combined with steadily-increasing youth activism in communities across the country, these notable developments have further fed awareness of—and among—the hip hop generation.

Groups like Black August Hip Hop Collective, the Third Eye Movement and LISTEN are tackling an array of issues like the prison-industrial complex, police brutality, and the erosion of civil liberties. Multi-issue activists like Tamara Jones organize youth in several cities and through a number of organizations around AIDS awareness, police brutality and gay and lesbian rights. In Kitwana's *The Hip Hop Generation*, Jones challenges single-minded,

sexist and homophobic representations in hip hop and its corresponding politics by emphasizing that "many in the post-civil rights era recognize the limits of a race-only politics and realize that we can't talk about black liberation without race, class, gender, sexual identity or immigrant issues."

Given this active environment, it appears to be a ripe time for this generation to rise to the national challenge. But for Davey D, the challenge is not necessarily to organize on a national level, but to remain active locally while communicating these efforts to counterparts in other regions. "All hip hop is local," he says. "Each community has its own collective psychology."

While agreeing that links between local communities need to increase, Kitwana sees it differently. "Because we live in this high-tech information age, what is considered to be the public square has changed." He identifies this square as "the means by which information gets communicated and becomes a part of national culture," while clarifying that—unlike the previous role of local black churches and other civil rights-era institutions—culture is now transmitted through media. "If a hip hop political movement remains local, it's not going to have the same effect." Kitwana insists that further activism is spurred when people feel they are part of something larger. "If it's seen as a national movement, the possibilities for change are endless."

T.J. Crawford gives merit to both views. "Across the country, we are struggling with a lot of the same issues," he says. "But the only way we can connect these efforts nationally is through the strength of our local communities. You can't put out a national call without having firm local foundations that allow for the call to be heard and the effort sustained."

But whether local or national, Kitwana, Crawford and Davey D all agree that empowering the hip hop generation is a necessary and ongoing chapter in a story far from finished. "We are living in an exciting and historical moment," says Rosa Clemente. "Our children will judge us by how we partake in it." ■

Damien Jackson is a freelance writer. This story was produced under the George Washington Williams Fellowship for Journalists of Color, a project sponsored by the Independent Press Association.

Gangs of Orange County

By Kevin Y. Kim

At last year's Sundance Film Festival, an angry audience member stood up after the third screening of a film charting four Asian-American teen-agers' descent into petty

Better Luck Tomorrow
Directed by Justin Lin

crime, drugs and murder. "Why would you," the man addressed Justin Lin, the film's director, "make a film that is so empty [and] amoral for Asian-Americans?" Bedlam uncharacteristic of indie film's premiere glamfest ensued, out of which a fist-pumping Roger Ebert rose to deliver this riposte: "Nobody would say to a bunch of white filmmakers, 'How could you do this to your people?' ... Asian-American characters have the right to be whoever the hell they want to be!"

The Joy Luck Club for today's MTV-goggling generation *Better Luck Tomorrow* definitely isn't. Parents, whether slick assimilationist or hoary immigrant, are conspicuously absent from Lin's film, with off-screen intergenerational conflict making its presence felt in the occasional aside ("My Dad is gonna kill me!") and the inveterate wanderlust of its lost, lost youth. Think Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* in teen comedic trappings, minus the fears of manic critics over the prospect of race riots sweeping from Bed-Stuy to a hood near you.

No journalists in riot gear this time—partly because Asians, no doubt, are viewed less threateningly than America's blacks. More importantly, the violence of *Better Luck Tomorrow*'s denouement isn't interracial, but maddeningly, ineradicably internecine. Told through flashbacks deftly interwoven with scenes from a teeny-bopping party, it initiates several mournful sequences capped by an open-ended finale leaving us with no answers, only burning questions: What leads kids like Ben (Parry Shen), the film's protagonist, down the slippery slope of teen violence? Are negligent parents—even those letting their kids' straight A's serve as "alibis"—somehow to blame? And what's race, to remix Tina Turner, got to do with it?

Better Luck Tomorrow, for its part, warns that Americans of all colors can't be whoever the hell they want to be just yet. Racism as cross-burning ideology has waned, but in its place a much subtler, everyday discrimination chips away at the characters in this film. It takes a courthouse protest, spurred on by a front-page article about Ben's role as "the token Asian" on the school basketball team, to get our hero some playing time. "Thank God," his clownish friend Virgil (Jason Tobin)



Better Luck Tomorrow: All right for fighting?

exclaims, after learning that Stephanie (Karin Anna Cheung), the Asian hottie Ben passive-aggressively chases throughout the film, was dating rich Asian brat Steve (John Cho) and not another "white dude." Later Ben, Virgil, Virgil's roughneck cousin Han (Sung Kang) and Daric (Roger Fan)—the "mastermind" behind the group's burgeoning trade in cheatsheets, drugs and stolen hardware—exchange blows with some race-baiting jocks. You can assimilate and run, but you can't always hide from a mainstream that relishes hammering out the margins.

So is this film only for Asians? The four are mostly at peace with the larger society around them, unracked by identity crises and racial conflicts, which are the exception rather than the rule in the serene Orange County of Lin's making. Playing off model minority and Chinese gangster stereotypes, *Better Luck*

Tomorrow is a simple tale of youthful alienation, bottled-up frustrations, and false empowerment—themes universal enough that one white, middle-aged Wisconsinite reportedly approached Lin to confess his deep identification with these characters.

The above brushes with bigotry are to the film, finally, what Trent Lott and the Shaquille O'Neal-Yao Ming spat are to 21st-century America: Just proof that multicultural diversity has yet to turn into real, multicultural cohesion. "Be there for you man, every game," an impassioned, chubby student activist tells "Born To Warm" Ben as the two bear-hug in solidarity. It's a moment lit up by the comic recognition that identity politics, while important, isn't quite the real thing—nor the film's *primum mobile*, as characters struggle just as mightily with adolescence, gender, class and sheer suburban boredom.

But Lin does fix a high-powered microscope on race and violent youth, and what he finds is at once chilling and familiar. Throughout the film, Ben earns Steve's trust by escorting Stephanie to the junior prom (so Steve, we later learn, can take a blond bombshell out the same night), and by being the honest, sincere guy that Ben is (most of the time).

But after Steve enlists Ben's gang to rob his affluent but inattentive parents, automatic firearms and all, to give them "a wake-up call," the faux heist turns into a golden opportunity to give the rich boy his own "wake-up call." Ben hits Steve with a bat to knock a gun from his hands, pauses, then unleashes a frenzy that shocks everyone in the room.

It's the pause before the frenzy that holds the telling connection between race, violence and human nature—Ben, shaken and hesitant, stares down at Steve, who shoots back the baleful glance that ultimately gets him mauled. It's a look that demeans, a look that disempowers ("He thinks you're dickless," Daric tells Ben earlier), a look that strips away the humanity and self-worth that violence seeks, vainly, to restore. Spiraling around the dead, zooming in on the wan and rejected, Lin's camera is far from empty and amoral. It's utterly, piercingly human. ■

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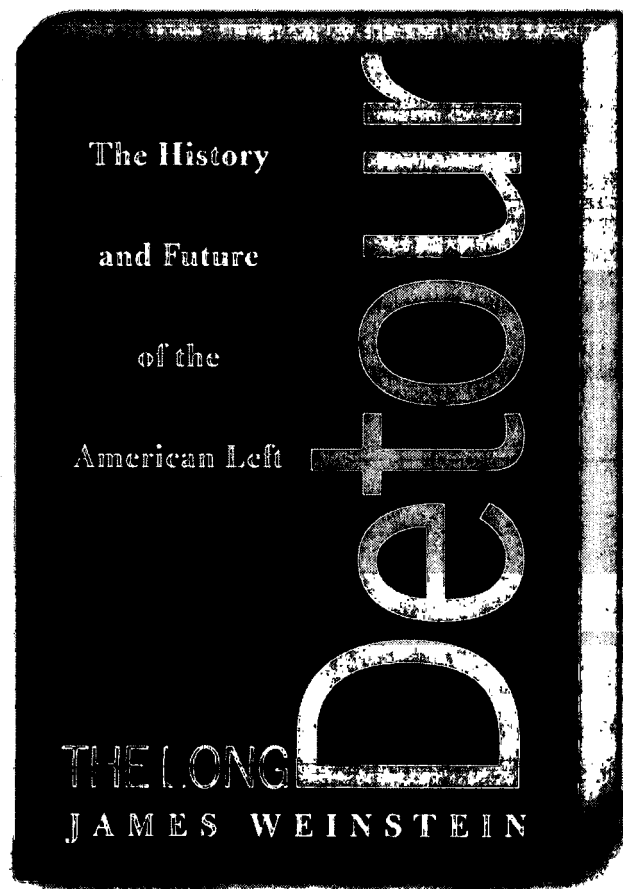
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As a lifelong socialist, and one-time Communist, the movement of history has always concerned me. And as a pathological optimist, I have always viewed American history as tending inexorably, if fitfully, toward a more inclusive democracy. Like many Americans who experienced the 20th century, I see history moving forward, driven by the progressive interaction between capitalist and socialist principles.

Still, by equating opposition to corporate domination of public life with disloyalty, our country's rulers disoriented the left, stifled public discussion of the most basic public policy issues, and transformed the left into a plethora of single-issue movements. This removed the progressive dialectic of opposing principles from our political culture and steadily narrowed the difference between the major parties. Without vigorous debate over alternative values and principles the left has receded from view, and our political system has been converted to one focused on personality, appearance, and the ability to raise money for trivial, brain-numbing television and radio commercials.

In short, it has become more and more difficult for working people, or associations who represent their interests, to participate meaningfully in national affairs. And as working people are excluded from this process, fewer and fewer bother to vote.

With differences between the major parties or their candidates disappearing, and with the left—and the socialist ideas that shaped it—absent from popular discourse, more and more citizens retreat into private life, ignorant of the impact of public policies on their lives.

During the heyday of American socialism, capitalists epitomized the principle of market-driven rapacious individualism,

while socialists were the most consistent—and insistent—advocates of reforms that moved society toward greater equality and democracy. To those steeped in its principles, socialism was more than the movement's specific policy proposals at any given time. The old Socialist Party's "immediate demands" were an expression of its principles as they applied to the stage of capitalist development in the early 20th century; but these reforms were not its ultimate goal or driving force. In fact, as American capitalism reached industrial maturity it accepted and internalized many socialist principles. But as capitalism transformed itself into a post-industrial consumer-driven society, socialists have not moved beyond their earlier ideas and have had little new to say.

To me socialism means the fulfillment of the promise of American democracy. As an historian, I have studied the ways in which socialist principles of associational democracy gained meaningful expression in our society and helped to democratize our nation's advance from the laissez faire individualism of the late 19th century to the corporate liberalism of the 20th century. That process ended with the Russian Revolution, but now that the Soviet Union is gone, a new beginning is possible—if not for a movement that calls itself socialist, then for one embodying the underlying principles that gave the old American movement its impetus. ■

James Weinstein founded *In These Times* in 1976. This article is adapted from his new book, *The Long Detour: The History and the Future of the American Left*. For more information go to his Web site, www.thelongdetour.com, where you can also order the book.

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The Long Detour

The History and Future of the American Left

By James Weinstein

For a few brief months, after the Soviet Union's peaceful collapse, streams of vacuous babble about the "end of history" flooded the media. The Cold War ended so swiftly and effortlessly that simple minds were filled with dreams of unchallengeable power and eternal American world domination. According to the promoters of this idea, American-style capitalism fulfills human needs so well that a century of struggle against capitalism's underlying social principles has ended, and a future of imperturbable American hegemony lies ahead. But history has not been impressed. As events in the Middle East have made all too clear, history's end is nowhere in sight.

In fact, in retrospect, the Cold War seems more like a long detour from history—a time when the left was disoriented and the political life of the nation became one-dimensional. Our nation's leaders and the media promoted the Cold War as a contest of historic proportions—a fight to the death between capitalism and Communism.

Today, the Soviet threat (and its identity with socialism) now appears to have been grossly exaggerated. Indeed, the Cold War itself can be seen as an historical hiatus—a ritually choreographed standoff that afforded the American ruling class with both protection from dissent and an organizing principle for its retrograde foreign and domestic policies, while it provided the Soviet Union with a rationale for the Communist Party's unquestioned rule at home and in Eastern Europe. In short, this time of fear and conformity was a godsend for the rulers on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

"I see history moving forward, driven by the progressive interaction between capitalist and socialist principles."

True, at times the Cold War seemed real enough—and at times military confrontations were devastating. The war against Vietnamese independence alone cost several million Indochinese lives, as well as the death of more than 56,000 American youth.

The Vietnam war created an ephemeral left, but it did so only after Americans became aware of the toll it was taking on both sides. And when the war was over, things went back to business as usual.

All that has now changed. The difference between ritual Cold War tensions and the terrors of the new era—real and faux—is all too clear. Now we confront a true enemy, an unpredictable, amorphous, almost intangible seething mass of freelancers, many of them highly educated and civilized, others feral, but all acting out of rage against the new American Empire. These popular forces confront American-style capitalism spontaneously, through non-governmental groups that ignore national boundaries. And they operate with little institutional control. Unlike the old enemy, the new one mounts deadly terrorist attacks on symbols of American military and commercial power, is secretly and informally organized, and is widely dispersed. As such it offers few clear targets for political or military engagement.

This situation threatens the social stability that post-industrial capitalism requires to function smoothly. And it offers the opportunity for megalomaniacal right-wingers to promote their militarist policies and dreams of world domination—as the Bush administration's actions show all too well. For all of democratic society, and especially for the left, this new (and certainly transitory) stage of history is costly and frightening. It is the price we pay for 50 years of political and intellectual stagnation, a time when the political dynamic of capitalism was sidetracked by the Cold War.

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